

Unemployment, poverty and misery bring thousands onto the streets >>Pages 4&5

**Protests in Iran challenge the regime**



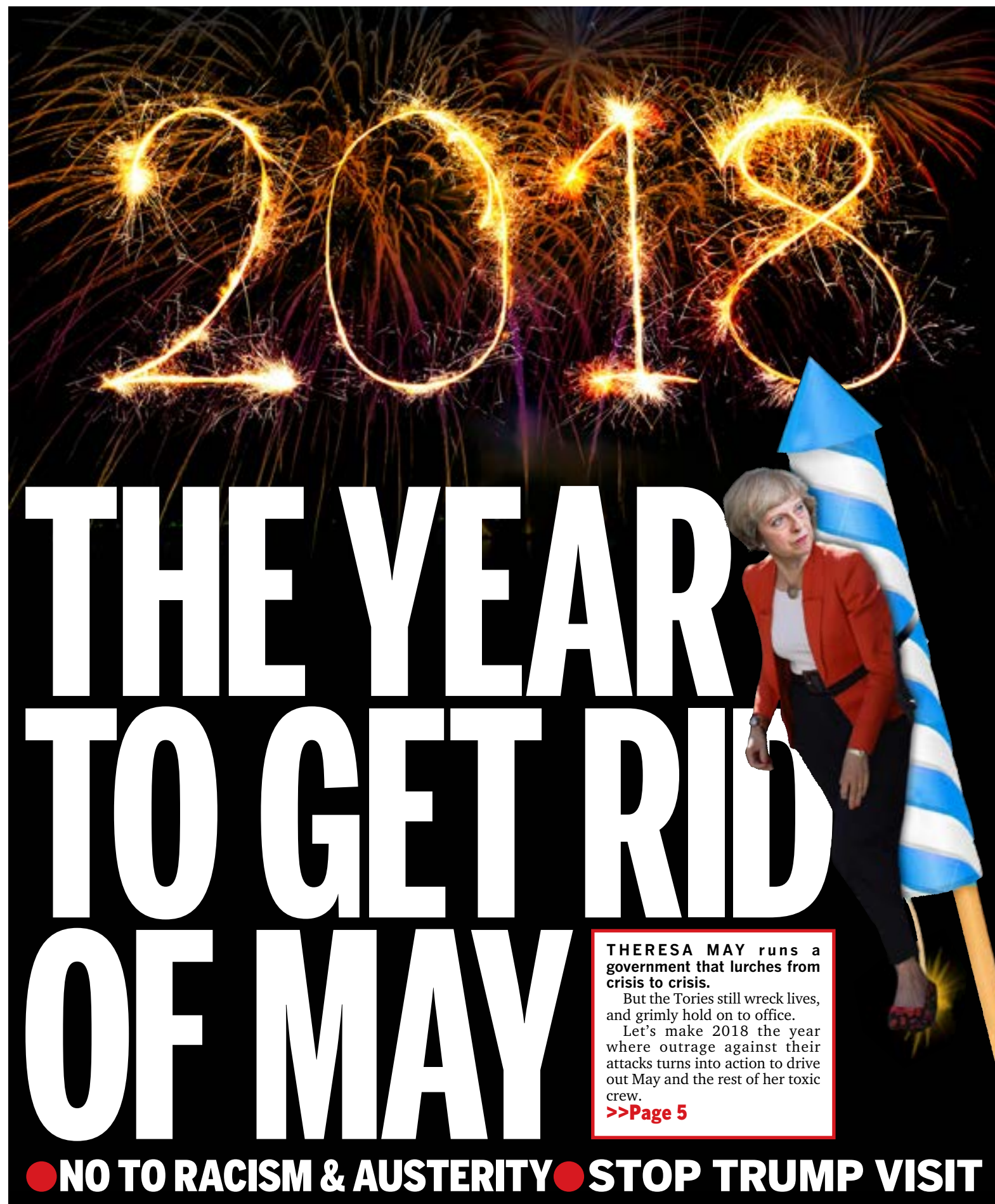
The year millions dared to dream of a new society... and decided to fight for it >>Pages 10&11

Fifty years since the '68 revolts



# Socialist Worker

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## THE YEAR TO GET RID OF MAY

**THERESA MAY runs a government that lurches from crisis to crisis.**

But the Tories still wreck lives, and grimly hold on to office.

Let's make 2018 the year where outrage against their attacks turns into action to drive out May and the rest of her toxic crew.

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● NO TO RACISM & AUSTERITY ● STOP TRUMP VISIT

### ROYALS

## No pay for waiting on princes

by ALISTAIR FARROW

**ROYAL scroungers, princes Harry and William, feasted on food served by unpaid workers.**

They dined at the Notting Hill branch of Beach Blanket Babylon (BBB) on 13 December, according to one waiter.

No doubt the royals had a comfortable Christmas—but the workers who served them were left short of hundreds of pounds and unable to pay rent.

BBB boss Robert Newmark has a long history of refusing to pay workers what they're



Posh Nosh: wages not on the menu

owed. And he was banned from acting as a company director for five years in 2016 for running up a £1 million unpaid tax bill.

Mariola, one of the workers who served the parasite pair, spoke to Socialist Worker. "I'm at a loss as to why BBB says they can't pay me when clearly they have money coming in," she said.

Attendees at the BBB Notting Hill New Year's Eve party paid £125 per person to guzzle champagne and gorge on foie gras.

The idea the company doesn't have the cash to

>>continued on page 3





## THE THINGS THEY SAY

**'I am deeply concerned about your unpatriotic attitude towards cheese'**

Tory minister **Michael Gove**

**'I think music has gotten very girly.'**

**Bono** thinks music isn't as macho as it should be

**'Is that a terrorist?'**

The **Duke of Edinburgh** as he pointed out a bearded man

**'When I was skiing I started writing the letter of resignation in my mind while looking out over the Alps'**

**Lord Adonis** on the trauma of resigning from the government

**'Delete Ugh'**

One editorial comment on the manuscript "alt-right" **Milo Yiannopoulos's** autobiography

**'There are pockets of the organisation where a significant number of representatives are Freemasons'**

**Steve White**, retiring chair of the Police Federation, on the state of the federation



# MP told of 'jam on the cake' to frame Birmingham Six

**EVIDENCE AGAINST the Birmingham Six was "enhanced", a police chief told a Tory MP years before their eventual release.**

The MP confided the chief constable's disclosure to an Irish diplomat, who in turn told the government in Dublin that police added "jam to the cake" to make the evidence stick.

In a letter delivered by courier in December 1987 the diplomat alerted the Irish government about the claim weeks before Court of Appeal judges upheld convictions against the six innocent men.

Barry Porter, then Tory MP for Wirral South in Liverpool, privately admitted that some of the evidence against them was "enhanced".

The diplomat said, "He said that the chief constable of Liverpool told him he knew that the evidence against the six was enhanced by the police. It was the chief constable who used the term 'adding jam to the cake'."

"He confirmed that the chief constable

was talking about frightening the prisoners sufficiently to get satisfactory confessions out of them."

The diplomat noted that Sir Kenneth Oxford was chief constable of Merseyside police from 1976 to 1989.

The Birmingham Six—Paddy Hill, Hugh Callaghan, Gerard Hunter, Richard McIlkenny, William Power and John Walker—were wrongly jailed for life in 1975 in England for IRA bombings which killed 21 people.

After long campaigns their convictions were eventually quashed in the appeal court.

Newly released documents show that Paddy Hill accused successive Irish governments of abandoning them.

He accused Irish politicians of being timid. "I won't be seeing any representatives of any Irish party," he wrote. "As far as I'm concerned they are all a load of shit."

"I had enough of them when they visited us at Long Lartin and they still haven't had the courage to publicly

declare that we are innocent and that we were TORTURED + FRAMED for something we knew nothing about."

He also wrote, "The British system don't know how to spell the word JUSTICE never mind dispensing it."

**A SCOTTISH duke** has been handed a rare honour by being made a Knight of the Thistle by the queen. Richard Scott is the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry. The appointment of the Duke, one of Britain's largest landowners, is clearly deserved.

And the dukes must have a strong union—the award will be backdated to St Andrew's Day 2017.

**THERESA MAY** has appointed the odious Toby Young to look after universities. He once wrote about "universally unattractive" and "small vaguely deformed undergraduates". He was writing about how the arrival of "stains" as the working class students were known changed Oxford university.

## A racist royal gets knife through heart

**PRINCESS MICHAEL** of Kent has apologised after wearing a racist brooch to the queen's Christmas lunch at Buckingham Palace. It was attended by Prince Harry's fiancée Meghan Markle, who is of mixed heritage.

The royal was photographed wearing the brooch depicting a black figure on her coat as she arrived for the annual gathering on Wednesday.

In 2004, she reportedly instructed African American customers in a New York restaurant to "go back to the colonies" in an argument about noise.

The princess, whose father was an SS officer, denied the incident saying, "I even pretended years

Racist

ago to be an African, a half-caste African, but because of my light eyes I did not get away with it, but I dyed my hair black.

"I had this adventure with these absolutely adorable, special people and to call me racist: it's a knife through the heart because I really love these people."

## Thames Water can't turn off offshore tap

**IN NOVEMBER** Thames Water, Britain's biggest water and sewage company, proudly announced it would close its Cayman Islands subsidiaries. Now, just a few weeks later, it has said it will issue a £145 million bond through...a Cayman Islands subsidiary.

The company has also appointed **Ian Marchant** as chairman.

He will be paid £325,000 a year for working two days a week to look into the company's pay and bonuses.

Thames Water has a complex corporate structure that involves nine main

Ian Marchant

group companies.

Two of them are registered in the Cayman Islands.

Its other subsidiaries, including one in Guernsey.

The company paid no corporation tax over the past ten years while paying dividends of £1.16 billion between 2006 and 2015.

## Fat cats who trouser 760% pay rises

**SOME 28 fatcats** doubled their pay last year. The biggest rise went to **Chris Silva**, the departing boss of science and technology firm Allied Minds.

His total package soared by 760 percent to £6.7 million a year.

He even gets £400,000 annual salary for the next two years as part of a golden handshake.

In second spot, with a 451 percent pay rise also to £6.7 million a year, is **Lee Feldman** chairman of gambling group GVC.

Next is the chief executive of emergency repairs business **Homeserve**, **Martin Bennett**, who got just a 412 percent rise to £3.1 million.

## FIGURE IT OUT

**52%**

of committals to prison for council tax debt may have been unlawful according to evidence at a judicial review

**95**

people went to prison in the year to July 2017 for council tax debt

**13%**

of council tax debtors were committed to prison despite not being present in court

## Getting the right type of neighbours

**THE RICH** of Sandbanks, Dorset, are taking no chances when it comes to who might move into their neighbourhood.

Businessman **Ashley Faulk** is building a £4 million home there—next door to his own.

But it seems the extortionate price tag still might not be enough to make sure that the right "type" of person buys it.

So the millionaire will personally interview potential buyers himself.

"Having very good neighbours is very important to my wife and I," he explained.

"Sometimes just having money is not enough."

If Troublemaker readers would like to apply, you will need to be "fairly normal" and want to lead a "relatively relaxed life".

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# Resist rise of racism and threat from right in 2018

by ALISTAIR FARROW

**RACIST ATTACKS, border controls, Islamophobia and the threat of the Football Lads Alliance (FLA) underline the importance of fighting racism in all its forms in 2018.**

The FLA has called its next demonstration on 24 March in Birmingham.

There is no longer any doubt it is a racist organisation. In the FLA's private Facebook group London mayor Sadiq Khan is racially abused. "Behead the c\*\*\*," wrote Mark Scargill.

And FLA founder John Meighan recently posted a picture of himself endorsing an Islamophobic book co-authored by Nazi Tommy Robinson.

The FLA is also supporting a racist Veterans Against Terrorism rally in Newcastle on 17 February.

The FLA protest in Birmingham will come a week after the Stand Up To Racism national demonstrations in London, Glasgow and Cardiff on 17 March. These are central for all anti-racists.

## Division

The racism at the top of society fuels attacks and division.

In Durham a Palestinian university student was attacked by two men outside the Happy Wanderer pub on Christmas Eve.

Ihsan Abualrob told the Northern Echo newspaper that he and his friends were approached and asked where they were from.

Ihsan said, "My friends said from Egypt and myself from Palestine. He said, 'Egypt, Palestine. You Muslims. Are you suicide bombers?'" Three men followed and attacked them.

Meanwhile, anti-racists in Oxford are calling for full disclosure and justice after the death of Nuno Cardoso in police custody.

And the racist attacks on migrants also mean deaths at Britain's borders.

**'DON'T LET the Nazis rule'—Austrian anti-fascists protest against the new Tory/Nazi coalition last month**

## ANTI-RACIST DIARY

**Some of the key dates for Stand Up To Racism activists in 2018**

● **27 January**—Holocaust Memorial Day

● **10 February**—Stand Up To Racism trade union conference

● **26-27 February**—possible dates of a Trump visit to Britain

● **17 March**—Stand Up To Racism demonstrations in London, Cardiff and Glasgow

● For more details go to [standuptoracism.org.uk](http://standuptoracism.org.uk)

Over the past two weeks three people have died trying to reach Britain from northern France.

One was 15 years old. He died on a motorway trying to reach his family who are already in Britain.

In a separate incident a 22 year old was killed when a lorry crashed. And a 31 year old Eritrean was crushed to death last Friday near Calais port.

## Volunteers

The Home Office has also confirmed it plans to introduce "Border Force Special Volunteers". It is an invitation to have-a-go racists to get involved in policing Britain's borders.

PCS union general secretary Mark

Serwotka said, "The government are making our borders weaker with the use of casual labour."

But the real issue is that borders are killing people who are fleeing wars created by Britain or who just want a better life. They should be allowed to do both.

All of this news comes as racist US president Donald Trump's team prepares his visit to Britain. Before Christmas they said the date of the visit would be announced "soon".

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has said people should turn out to send the president "a clear message".

There must be huge demonstrations when Trump comes.

# Trojan Horse decision will be withheld

by SADIE ROBINSON

A TRIBUNAL ruling relating to a man embroiled in the Trojan Horse hoax in Birmingham will not be published—even though the hearing was public.

The hoax saw false claims that Muslims were trying to take over schools to "Islamise" them.

Tahir Alam was chair of governors at Park View School. The Department for Education (DfE) issued him with a ban in 2015 after officials concluded he had tried to undermine "British values".

Tahir challenged the ruling in March last year. The DfE said

the tribunal upheld its original decision.

The decision not to publish the full ruling means that, if it contains any criticism of the DfE, this will be kept secret.

Cases against teachers implicated in the hoax were dropped after the DfE's National College for Teaching and Leadership was found to have withheld evidence.

A panel ruled withholding evidence amounted to an "abuse of process" that brought "the integrity of the process into disrepute".

Read Socialist Worker's feature on the new book that exposes the Trojan Horse Former Park View governor Tahir Alam

hoax at [bit.ly/2CCCBxP](http://bit.ly/2CCCBxP)

## ROYALS

# No pay for waiting on princes

>>>continued from page 1

pay workers is laughable.

"About a month and a half ago I didn't get paid on time," said Mariola. "They said they had difficulty processing things."

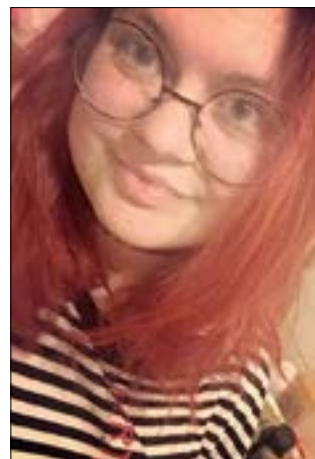
"They paid me a few days late. Then again four weeks ago I didn't get paid. I questioned why again and they said they didn't have the money to pay us."

"Quite a few of us hadn't been paid, so we said we're not going to come in."

"They paid us half, we came in and a few days later they paid the other half."

"Last month I didn't get paid again so I questioned it. My manager said you're meant to be paid half today, half tomorrow."

"The next day came and I still hadn't been paid so I messaged her again. About half an hour later they paid



Mariola, who wasn't paid

£200 when it was supposed to be £598 altogether."

Mariola's pay slips and bank statement back up her version of events. On one pay slip the processing date is given as 15 December 2017.

Yet no payment from BBB appears on her bank statement between that date and 29 December.

She has since stopped working for BBB, but they still owe her and others money.

"We've sent them emails, messaged them on Twitter and Facebook but they've just ignored and blocked us," she said.

"I've had to borrow £400 off friends to cover my rent, but I'm two months behind."

Newmark and BBB are up to their old tricks—if they ever stopped.

## Socialist Worker Appeal 2017

**Thanks to all our readers and supporters for donating to Socialist Worker's 2017 appeal. We reached £123,618**

**If you would like to donate to help us keep covering the stories of struggle and solidarity go to [socialistworker.co.uk/appeal](http://socialistworker.co.uk/appeal) Or call 020 7840 5620**



## Video

Socialist Worker confronts Newmark [bit.ly/2lEdJI](http://bit.ly/2lEdJI)





# Protests in Iran show ‘anger and a huge desire for freedom’

by NICK CLARK

## BACK STORY

**Declining living standards have sparked protests in Iran**

- Protesters are angry that the government has spent money on wars while they face poverty
- Ordinary people in Iran face rising prices, high unemployment and low wages
- The protests have become more political as people are also angry at government corruption
- Western powers have cynically backed the protests to undermine Iran, which is a rival to US allies

**LARGE PROTESTS** against unemployment, poverty, corruption and the political elite that have swept Iran face a brutal crackdown by government forces.

Thousands of people have protested in towns and cities across Iran, in the largest wave of unrest since 2009. At least 15 people were confirmed to have been killed by Monday—the fifth day of protests—as demonstrators clashed with police.

Protests began on Thursday of last week in the city of Mashhad after Iranian president Hassan Rouhani announced a draft budget that promised austerity and price rises.

But the demonstrations quickly spread to other cities and became more radical. Slogans have included, “Death to Rouhani,” and, “With less corruption our problems will be solved”.

This comes after years of a deepening economic crisis that has fuelled price rises, low wages and high unemployment.

The “reformist” Rouhani was elected in 2013 with plans to open up Iran’s economy to big business and foreign investment. Iran’s reformists promised that wealth would trickle down to the poor, creating jobs and boosting wages.

### Strikes

But Rouhani’s government has pursued austerity. Strikes have become more common since his election.

Asad Keshavari, an Iranian activist living in Britain, said, “The economic crisis has deepened.

“We can see this in the huge debts of the government to banks, the depletion of pension funds, the bankruptcy of financial institutions and unbelievable amounts of corruption and embezzlement.

“During the last three or four years we’ve had major strikes and pickets by workers in Arak and oil and gas rich areas in the south.”

The initial protest was reported to have been organised by “hardliners” from Iran’s

Iran’s president Hassan Rouhani

political establishment opposed to the reformists’ changes.

Yet neither the hardliners nor the reformists that make up Iran’s political establishment can satisfy the demands of ordinary people.

The last wave of major demonstrations in 2009—the so-called “Green Movement”—saw mass protests against “hardliner” Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s government.

That movement was crushed in a violent crackdown, but the hardliners were defeated in the 2013 elections.

Speaking on Sunday Rouhani said protesters should have “space to criticise” the government, but also warned of a crackdown against “violent” demonstrations.

Police had already attacked protesters as Rounani spoke. In some towns protesters reportedly occupied police stations in retaliation.

Asad said, “Wherever the regime has used an iron fist the people have punished it severely. What we see is amazing bravery and tremendous anger, and huge desire for freedom and social justice.”

STUDENTS PROTEST in Iran

## Western hypocrites hope to exploit demonstrations for their own ends

**THE PROTESTS** in Iran are messy and contradictory. Some of the chants have been right wing, or hostile towards Arabs.

And forces such as the US and Israel, responsible for immense suffering across the Middle East, have opportunistically backed the demonstrations.

Iran is locked in a competition with US allies Israel and Saudi Arabia for control of the Middle East. It has intervened in wars in Iraq and Syria to extend its influence in the region.

That competition has threatened to spill over into yet another bloody conflict in recent months.

### Wars

Protesters in Iran are angry that the government has spent money on wars while they suffer poverty and unemployment.

Some protesters have chanted slogans such as, “Forget about Syria—think about us”.

Others have chanted more nationalist slogans such as, “Neither Gaza, nor Lebanon,

Meanwhile Israeli media has presented the protests as a complete rejection of Iran’s stance against the West.

In response, Iranian officials have warned that Saudi Arabia is behind the protests.

### Sanctions

Trump and his allies are hypocrites. Years of US-led sanctions against Iran, recently reinvigorated by Trump, cause hardship for ordinary people.

Trump has repeatedly talked of conflict with Iran that would be devastating. And wars waged by Saudi Arabia and Israel have torn the region apart.

The protests from below clearly have a life of their own.

They could grow into a movement beyond the control of any regional power—and shake the rulers across the Middle East.

But workers will have to guard their independence from imperialist attempts to hijack them.

Thanks to Iranian revolutionary socialist Nima Soltanzadeh

I give my life for Iran”. Other slogans such as, “We are Aryans, we don’t worship Arabs,” show that some protesters are open to racist ideas.

US president Donald Trump tweeted, “The people are finally getting wise as to how their money and wealth is being stolen and squandered on terrorism.

“Looks like they will not take it any longer.”

A woman protester in Tehran

## Palestinians face brutal crackdown on resistance

ISRAEL’S crackdown on the Palestinian resistance has continued since it was launched late last year following a speech by US president Donald Trump.

Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip took to the streets after Trump declared that Jerusalem was the capital of Israel.

Israeli forces have killed at least 14 Palestinians since Trump’s speech. One of their most recent victims, 20 year old Jamal Muhammed Musleh, died on Saturday after being shot in the chest.

Israel has launched several airstrikes on the Gaza Strip in the last month. And Israeli forces have also detained close to 700 Palestinians since Trump’s announcement.

One of the most prominent, 16 year old Ahed Tamimi, was arrested after being filmed slapping an Israeli soldier.

Pro-Israeli groups hoped to use the

video as evidence of Palestinian “provocation” of its soldiers. But the footage of unarmed Tamimi confronting the heavily armed soldier became symbolic of the Palestinian resistance to the occupation.

It later emerged that a soldier had shot Tamimi’s 14 year old cousin Mohammed in the face at close range with a rubber bullet. The assault left Mohammed in a critical condition.

Trump’s speech encouraged Israel’s right wing government and its supporters who

want to rob even more Palestinian land. The ruling Likud party’s central committee passed a motion on Sunday calling for the annexation of large sections of the West Bank.

Yet the speech also caused problems for the US and Israel. The United Nations general assembly voted by a huge majority against Trump’s move in December.

And Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas has warned of the end of the “peace process” and assistance in policing the resistance.

“normal” liberal state.

A high profile Israeli group took out a full page advert in the US newspaper the Washington Post, denouncing her as a bigot and an antisemite.

Boycotts play an

important role in undermining Israel.

The Israeli government approved a plan last Friday to set aside £53 million to combat BDS.

It comes ahead of Israeli Apartheid Week, a series of events in support of Palestinians across university campuses, set to begin on 1 March.

Efforts to disrupt Israeli Apartheid Week last year led to events at several universities being restricted and even cancelled.

## Saudi bombs kill in Yemen

AIRSTRIKES by Western ally Saudi Arabia in Yemen killed 68 civilians in a single day last month.

Reports from the United Nations human rights office showed that a Saudi airstrike on a crowded market

killed 54 civilians including eight children.

A second airstrike the same day killed 14 people from the same family.

Saudi Arabia is waging a war against Yemeni rebels from

the Houthi movement, which it says are backed by its regional rival Iran.

It is heavily armed by Britain. Britain sold Saudi Arabia at least £1 billion worth of arms in 2017, including missiles.

**Socialist Worker**  
WHAT WE THINK

## DON’T WAIT UNTIL 2022 TO FIGHT AGAINST TORY RULE

**WE** CAN’T wait until the next general election—which might not come until 2022—to get the Tories out.

The government doesn’t haven’t a stable majority in parliament, and is wracked by divisions over Brexit. The year ended with Theresa May sacking her close friend and deputy prime minister Damian Green because he lied about pornography on his work computer.

May survives as prime minister only because there is no unifying figure to replace her and the fear of a Jeremy Corbyn government.

The Sunday Times claimed that five of the 21 Cabinet ministers are headed for the chop, and others, including Boris Johnson, could be shunted to new roles.

May’s Brexit “triumph” of reaching the next set of negotiations with the European Union has quickly come up against reality.

The talks now become even more difficult, and more likely to lead to defeats in parliament.

But for all their weaknesses, the Tories remain in office delivering brutal austerity and racism.

Homeless people are left to rot on the streets. Migrants are left to die in Calais.

The NHS is in crisis. On 30 December Dr Richard Fawcett, a consultant at one of Britain’s largest A&E units, revealed patients were being held in ambulances.

Not only were there no beds, but the corridors were too full. Trade union leaders have issued plenty of denunciations of Tory destruction. But there’s precious little resistance.

It’s good that some sections of workers, such as lecturers, are voting on strikes over pay and pensions. But other unions should be alongside them.

The TUC demonstration on

12 May is welcome, but not nearly enough.

Jeremy Corbyn’s new year message attacked the “self-serving elite, who look after themselves and their friends and a failed system which delivers staggering wealth at the top, while more and more people struggle to simply make ends meet.”

But Labour needs to build resistance in the streets and the workplaces, not just waiting for elections.

We have to act ourselves. Socialist Worker urges all its readers to build all the Stand Up To Racism events, in particular the national demonstrations on 17 March in London, Cardiff and Glasgow.

We need to push for more strikes and protests, and step up solidarity with every strike and every battle for the NHS, education and other services.

And if Donald Trump dares to come to Britain, perhaps on 26 February, there will need to be hundreds of thousands on the streets against him, backed by workplace action, student walkouts and occupations.

Let’s make 2018 a year of successful resistance.

**We need to push for more strikes and protests and step up solidarity with every fight**

## YOUNG’S FREE SPEECH LIES

**FREE SCHOOL** fanatic Toby Young will be in charge of policing who is allowed to speak on university campuses.

The right winger, who set up a string of failed free schools, was appointed to the board of the new Office for Students (OfS).

As well as imposing marketisation, the OfS will oversee universities minister Jo Johnson’s plan to fine colleges for “no platforming” speakers.

Johnson’s plans have nothing to do with defending free speech.

The biggest threat to free speech on campus comes from the Tories’ Islamophobic “Prevent” strategy. It forces public sector bodies to spy for signs of “radicalisation” and “non-violent extremism”—code for opposing Britain’s imperialist foreign policy.

They can impose a speaker with opposing views or insist on a neutral chair. In November 2017 the University of Cambridge imposed its director of communications as a chair on a Palestine solidarity meeting.

Other measures have been used to ban meetings.

Johnson said his plans still included stopping “racist and antisemitic speakers”.

But in reality the main targets will be Palestine solidarity campaigners, who the right smears as antisemitic for opposing Israel.

Only Nazis should be no platformed, by actions from below and students and lecturers’ decisions. We have to stand in solidarity with Muslims against the racist clampdown on campuses.

**SOCIALIST REVIEW**

**NO ROOM FOR RACISM**

Glyn Robbins on how the housing crisis disproportionately hits black communities

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Patrick Nielsen debunks the claim that Lenin led to Stalin

Cathy Porter on the anti-fascist tapestries of Hannah Ryggen

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**NO ROOM FOR RACISM**



## ANALYSIS

SIMON BASKETTER 

## The 'missing' files that expose the state

**EVERY SIX months the National Archives release previously classified documents. In among the eating or driving arrangements of politicians, and gossip about diplomacy lies long forgotten information about the workings of the British state.**

But there is a serious, recurring problem. The rate of document releases from the archives has increased recently but so has the amount of files that are missing or officially withheld.

This year some 190 of the 490 files scheduled for release from the Prime Minister's office have been retained by the government. Withheld files include dossiers on the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, the Scott arms-to-Iraq Inquiry, and the basing of US cruise missiles in Britain.

A file on allegations of sexual abuse at the Kincora boys' home in Belfast, which former army information officer Colin Wallace said was covered up by MI5, was withheld.

Even dozens of government files covering Britain's European policy in the early 1990s have been held back. Of the 45 European files due to be released, the Cabinet Office has retained 38.

Worse, about another 1,000 files have gone missing after being removed by civil servants, according to a Freedom of Information request.

Officially they are "misplaced while on loan to a government department". Documents on Britain's war in Northern Ireland, British colonial rule in Palestine, tests on polio vaccines and much more have supposedly vanished.

Documents can be hugely important in fighting miscarriages of justice.

In 2014 investigators uncovered a 1977 letter from the then home secretary, Merlyn Rees, to the Labour prime minister of the day, James Callaghan. In the letter Rees claimed that ministers had given permission for torture to be used in Northern Ireland. The information had been withheld from the European Court of Human Rights.

## Rendition

The same year the government said it could not release information about the CIA's "extraordinary rendition" programme because the files had suffered "water damage". They were water boarded, so to speak.

In 2013 it emerged that more than one million documents that should have been declassified were being unlawfully kept at a high-security compound in Buckinghamshire.

Their existence came to light when Kenyans who had been tortured during the 1950s Mau Mau rebellion took the government to the high court.

In other instances, papers from within files have been carefully selected and taken away.

Foreign Office officials removed a small number of papers in 2015 from a file concerning the 1978 murder of a dissident Bulgarian journalist.

The Ministry of Defence refused to consider a number of files for release under the Freedom of Information Act on the grounds that they may have been exposed to asbestos.

The files concerned arms sales to Saudi Arabia, operations by British special forces in Indonesia and torture techniques.

There are many ways the state hides its secrets. Sometimes it buries the information in the safety valve of public inquiries, sometimes it loses the files.

There is the perpetual chaos of the inquiries into child abuse. The inquiry into undercover policing looks set to keep more secrets that it reveals. The one into the Grenfell fire is rightly mistrusted by most survivors.

Sometimes truths emerge but that is usually down to the determination of campaigners rather than the forensic wit of barristers.

Perhaps most symbolic is the fate of the file on the infamous Zinoviev letter. MI6 officers plotted to bring about the downfall of the first Labour government nearly 100 years ago.

The letter was originally published as a slur in 1924 in the Daily Mail newspaper. It has vanished after Home Office civil servants took it away.

The Home Office declined to say why it was taken or when or how it was lost. Nor would it say whether any copies had been made. It took the British state 75 years to admit it was a fake—but it is still covering it up.

## Grenfell fire survivors angry at delays and obstructions

**ABOUT 100 households displaced by the Grenfell Tower fire were still living in hotels over Christmas.**

That's despite Theresa May's promise to rehouse people within three weeks of the fire.

On top of this, extra money promised to survivors by Kensington and Chelsea council to help cover Christmas costs did not arrive in time for 18 households.

The council had told families and individuals still in temporary accommodation they would get £140 per person to help ease December's bills.

Alex Adewunmi, an assistant at the Christian Tabernacle Centre near the tower, told the Mirror newspaper, "There have been 24 suicide attempts since the fire. People here are angry and struggling to cope."

Over Christmas KCTMO, the organisation that managed Grenfell Tower, announced it is temporarily handing back responsibility for housing to the council.

The news was met with anger from residents who want to hold the organisation to account.

## Accused

Joe Delaney of the Lancaster West Estate Residents Association accused the council and KCTMO of a "cynical, unethical and completely underhand move".

The inquiry into the causes of the fire held two days of procedural hearings last month to decide on its formal structure.

A submission, supported by a petition signed by over 25,000 people so far, was put forward by survivors. It



Joe Delaney PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

requested additional panel members with decision making powers to sit alongside the inquiry's chair, Sir Martin Moore-Bick.

In his written response Moore-Bick said, "I refuse the formal application that I should consult the core participants on the identity of potential additional panel members".

The reason he gave was

## RESIDENTS ON the silent march demand justice for the dead of Grenfell

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

he could not approach the prime minister with recommendations to appoint panel members.

In a letter to Moore-Bick, Theresa May said there was no need for an inquiry panel.

"I believe that the inquiry has the necessary expertise to undertake its work," she said.

Few people in North Kensington share her belief in the inquiry.

## Campaign

Moyra Samuels from the Justice4Grenfell campaign said, "People feel like they're being used."

"There is an incredible amount of mistrust in the inquiry."

There could be legal challenges to the inquiry, but they

can't be relied on to deliver justice—organisation on the ground is the critical factor.

A meeting is set to be held by the Justice for Grenfell campaign group later this month, details are to be confirmed.

"We need to figure out how we can put pressure on the inquiry and how we can get organised," said Moyra.

More than 3,000 people joined the monthly Silent Walk in December last year to demand justice for the victims of the fire.

That organisation and defiance will have to continue.



## Labour must promise ballots over regeneration

**THE LABOUR Party has launched an online survey about the state of social housing in Britain.**

It is designed as part of Labour's promised social housing review. At last year's party conference Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn announced a "radical programme of action".

Questions include, "How do we ensure an effective voice and role for tenants with their landlords, including on estate regeneration?"

But the demands from social tenants are



John Healey

clear—any regeneration proposals should be put to a ballot of residents.

The Labour leadership knows this—and Corbyn has promised regeneration ballots.

Launching the review, shadow housing minister John Healey said, "I want to hear from the housing sector about what you think Labour should do to put social housing at the centre of our efforts to tackle the housing crisis."

Healey has consistently put bosses' interests above those of tenants.

The review could be

seen as a fudge designed to delay an internal battle or avoid one altogether.

But the fight is already happening—estates are being sold off and redeveloped. And it is often Labour councils doing the dirty work.

The Labour leadership should stop trying to appease the right and fight for a radical vision of housing. But it's increasingly clear that they won't without pressure from below.

Respond to the survey by emailing [socialhousingreview@labour.org.uk](mailto:socialhousingreview@labour.org.uk)



# Coroner rules Becky was killed by NHS cuts

Tory austerity contributed to the tragic death of Becky Romero, argues **Tomáš Tengely-Evans**

**THE MOTHER** of Becky Romero, a teenager who died because of mental health cuts, has called a protest on 13 January to make sure it doesn't happen to anyone else.

Becky, a 15 year old from Bristol, died on 19 July.

The Avon Coroner ruled that a lack of NHS resources saw a “gross failure to provide basic medical attention” and “contributed to her death by neglect”.

Nicky Romero, Becky's mother, told Socialist Worker, “There are a hundred Beckies out there waiting for a bed. I've got friends in Manchester and Bristol going through the same now.”

The Becky Romero case highlights the chronic crisis in the NHS caused by Tory cuts. Becky was admitted to Bristol Children's Hospital in June.

## Worried

Nicky said, “Becky needed around the clock care.

“We were worried all the time not knowing what we'd find at home. “She said she didn't feel safe.”

But Riverside—Bristol's only adolescent mental health unit—has just nine beds.

This forced Becky to go 80 miles to Pebble Lodge in Bournemouth.

But because her stay in Bournemouth was only supposed to be temporary, health workers did not start long-term psychiatric treatment.

On the first night at Pebble Lodge, Becky attempted to take her own life. After leaving Bournemouth Becky was put onto a community care package.

Nicky said, “We were told it was best not go back—and they said it definitely wasn't to do with funding. We felt that they had made up their minds no matter what we said. We had no support after that time.”

Despite a visit from a social worker and two introductory visits from outreach workers, the package left Becky vulnerable during the summer holidays.

## BACK STORY

**The Tories' cuts mean the NHS is in severe crisis**

- The NHS is short of more than 100,000 workers

- Poverty pay and outsourced contracts make it hard to recruit and keep staff

- Staff shortages and a chronic lack of beds are having an impact on patients

- The Tories are trying to slash £22 billion from the NHS budget in England by 2020

- Last year the British Red Cross declared a “humanitarian crisis” in the NHS

Nicky said, “As for immediate care there was nothing in place—it had gone from 24 hours to one hour a week.” The bed Becky needed did become available, but Becky didn't get it because she was at Pebble Lodge then on a care package.

And there was no 24-hour hotline or support on the weekends that they could lean on.

## Scared

Nicky said, “All she was given was Samaritans and Child Line.

“4.52am on 19 July was the last time Becky was in contact with them, she told them that she was scared, then she went into the bath.”

Becky's death took place in the context of Tory cuts to the NHS that have slashed mental health and social care services.

The NHS needs a sharp injection of cash. As Nicky said, “We need funding and beds and there needs to be a backup plan when there aren't.”

See Facebook event. Justice for Becky Romero (Protest Against Bristol's Mental Health Crisis). Saturday 13 January, 1pm, Bristol city centre



**On other pages...**

Symptom of a sick society  
>>Page 14&15



**BECKY WAS** treated at Pebble Lodge in Bournemouth—some 90 miles from where she lived

## BENEFITS

# Tory ‘reforms’ mean people can't access the support they're entitled to

HUNDREDS OF thousands of unemployed people are not receiving financial support that they are entitled to.

As many as 300,000 are not claiming benefits worth at least £73 a week, according to the Resolution Foundation think tank.

Dubbed the “forgotten unemployed”, this group is predominately made up of older women aged 55 to 64 and younger men.

Some were also in work and entitled to claim Universal Credit (UC).

## Scapegoating

It disproves the lies of Tories and right wing newspapers that scapegoat benefit claimants as defrauding the welfare state.

The Tories' reforms during the last seven years have made it harder for people to access the support they need.

And the bigoted scapegoating means there is a stigma attached to claiming benefits which deters some people from claiming them.



**David Gauke**

PICTURE: UK IN JAPAN - FCO

The Tories are now rolling out UC, an amalgam of seven different benefits, across Britain.

And the policy has already caused hardship for people during the winter months.

Eileen, a UC claimant from west

London, told Socialist Worker, “A few weeks ago I suddenly found myself without a job, without savings to last more than a week, and without a way to get benefits.

“I'm 50, I didn't expect this.

“The care for my disabled son has broken down so I have to look after him, it's hard to get work.

“I was told I couldn't get anything on UC for weeks.”

## Determined

But the Tories are determined to push it through.

Work and pensions secretary David Gauke has begun to brazenly reject criticisms of UC as creating hardship for welfare claimants.

“I strongly believe we have got a really good policy with this that will transform lives,” he said.

Indeed it is transforming lives—for the worse.

Labour has called on the government to “pause and fix” UC.

But it can't be fixed—we have to campaign to “stop and scrap” it.



# Elections in Catalonia back break from Spain

Spain's prime minister is in trouble but he won't be beaten by manoeuvres, says **David Karvala**

**PRO-INDEPENDENCE parties retained an overall parliamentary majority in last month's elections to the Catalan parliament.**

This is despite the suspension of Catalan democratic institutions under Article 155 of the Spanish constitution, and with political leaders who back independence in prison.

Spanish prime minister Mariano Rajoy's right wing Popular Party (PP) has led this repression—with the active support of the Labour-type PSOE, and the Spanish right wing populists of Ciudadanos.

The PP lost more than half of its already low level of support. It took only 4 percent of the vote and now has just three MPs.

Ciudadanos won the highest number of votes of any single party.

It did especially well in the working class Spanish-speaking areas around Barcelona that used to vote for the Communist Party or more recently the Socialists.

It also won votes from PP supporters who saw it as the best option for opposing independence.

The party linked to Podemos, Catalunya en Comu, known as "The Commons", did badly.

Its former coalition won 11 MPs in the 2015 elections. Despite broadening the coalition, it now has eight MPs.

The key reason is undoubtedly the refusal to take a stand on independence.

## Democracy

Article 155 is effectively a coup against Catalan democracy. It is not acceptable to say you're against independence and 155 as if they are equally bad.

The biggest vote went to Catalan president Carles Puigdemont's Together For Catalonia (JxCat).

JxCat is a rebranding of Convergencia, the old party of Jordi Pujol, involved in years of cuts, privatisation and corruption.

The centre left party, Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) was widely expected to overtake JxCat. This

## BACK STORY

**The Catalan parliament in Barcelona declared independence from Spain in 27 October**

● This followed a referendum that saw 90 percent vote for independence on 1 October

● Spanish leader Mariano Rajoy banned the referendum

● But millions of Catalans defied state repression and police violence to defend it

● Catalan president Carles Puigdemont and his party have failed to fight that repression

didn't happen, possibly because many independence supporters argue that the current task is to defend the republic whose president is Puigdemont.

Yet Puigdemont's government has effectively refused to fight repression.

His party has shown it prefers to avoid the battles that are needed to build the republic.

Finally, the anti-capitalist and pro-independence CUP did badly, falling from ten to only four MPs.

There was the shift to defend Puigdemont, but the loss of MPs was also a result of the CUP not having managed to retain enough of an independent profile as an anti-capitalist force.

In addition to its parliamentary role, the CUP can and should still play a key role in building the struggle on the streets and in the workplaces.

It remains to be seen whether JxCat and ERC will continue to fight for independence. But it is clear that their former method of achieving it through an administrative measure agreed with Madrid won't work.

It will require struggle from below—and international solidarity

David Karvala is a member of the anti-capitalist network Marx21.net and one of the organisers of the international Catalan solidarity initiative WithCatalonia.org

SUPPORTERS OF Catalan independence celebrating last month's election results

## SOUTH AFRICA

# New ANC leader won't help workers

by **CHARLIE KIMBER**

**DELEGATES AT the African National Congress (ANC) conference last month elected deputy president Cyril Ramaphosa as the party's new leader.**

Ramaphosa's victory is an insult to the memory of the 34 miners massacred at Marikana in 2012. Ramaphosa was a non-executive director of Lonmin, the mining firm that worked with the police to carry out the killings.

Ramaphosa took 2,440 delegates' votes to 2,261 for his rival Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. But neither

candidate had answers for South Africa's workers and the poor.

South African's president Jacob Zuma blames the ANC's crisis on trade unions and the South African Communist Party (SACP).

A report from ANC chair Gwede Mantashe described the SACP and the pro-ANC Cosatu union federation as "reactionary".

However, Cosatu and the SACP might seek reconciliation now Ramaphosa has replaced Zuma.

A section of union leaders, led by the Numsa metalworkers' union, have long said they are "preparing" a workers' party as an alternative to the ANC. It must not be delayed any longer.

New ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa

## FIGURE IT OUT

**95** percent of people in Greece said they found it hard to get by in 2015, according to a study by diaNEOsis

**15** percent were found to be living in extreme poverty. The rate for children was 17.6 percent

**2.2** percent of people in Greece were living in extreme poverty in 2009

A GENERAL strike across both the public and private sectors brought Greece to a standstill on Thursday 14 December.

It was called by the ADEDY and GSEE union federations against austerity and the Syriza government's attack on the right to strike.

Thousands of workers marched through the capital

Athens and rallied outside parliament.

Panos Garganas, editor of Workers Solidarity newspaper, told Socialist Worker, "Banks are closed, no boats have left ports and internal flights were disrupted."

"There were no news bulletins on the TV and there will be no newspapers tomorrow."

"The extent of the

strike shows that even those close to Syriza were on strike."

Syriza was elected in January 2015 promising to break with austerity.

Yet it is pushing through austerity and free market reforms at the behest of Greece's creditors.

It's attempts to push through anti-union laws could see further mass resistance.

# General strike hits Greece



## Cash curbs don't stop addictions

THERE ARE rumours that social services in some London boroughs are severely restricting benefits for people with alcohol or drug dependencies.

This can sometimes be done under the Mental Capacity Act. People can receive a Personal Allowance as small as £10 a day.

The success rate has been abysmal, with those involved getting into debt, etc. Is it professional responsibility or manipulation?

Legal claims have been made and journalists have also been contacted to investigate.

Outreach officer  
East London

## Peace is still unobtainable

I CALLED at Batley Art Gallery recently to view an exhibition by Bradford based Peter Robson called Unobtainia.

It's a mixture of political art work that commemorates the battle of the Somme and the major role played by the Bradford PALS regiment.

Peters' work reflects the Somme and the horrors attached to it, but he also paints of a fear to come.

Unobtainia reflects the foolishness of conflict, the horror of the human cost, and that what we are still trying to grab is actually unobtainable.

The exhibition runs until 27 January.

John Appleyard  
West Yorkshire

## Draft London Plan will fail poorer Londoners

LONDON MAYOR Sadiq Khan's Draft London Plan is a disaster for working class Londoners.

Khan has not heard the message from Jeremy Corbyn's surge in the general election or from Haringey in north London.

There Labour friends of the developers have been deselected at packed meetings.

The Plan does nothing to address the shortage of the type of housing that poorer



ILLUSTRATION: TIM SANDERS

# Universal Credit nightmare has made me more political

MY MOTHER sadly passed away last May and the tenancy of our flat was transferred to me. I was told to move onto Universal Credit.

I explained to the Department for Work and Pensions that I suffer with severe anxiety and bipolar affective disorder. But I was basically bullied into looking for work.

I am currently paid £709 a month. My total rent comes to £613 a month leaving me less than £100 to live on. My electricity usage per month comes to around £70, so that leaves me £30 a month for food.

I am lucky that my dad began to give me a weekly allowance to buy myself food.

The constant stress of not

knowing how I would pay my bills caused me to become extremely stressed and depressed.

I ended up walking myself into A&E after self-harming.

A therapist convinced me to go into a mental health wing in my local hospital. I stayed there for nearly three weeks.

I called the Universal Credit people twice to say that I couldn't make my appointment and had a nurse speak to them to confirm this.

But they deducted £147.50 from my total amount per month. When I explained that I either pay my rent and starve or buy food and get evicted, I was told they could refer me to a food bank.

When my mother got sick and I

was diagnosed I had to leave work to support both her and myself.

I have to admit that before that I wondered why people going to food banks didn't get a job.

That's obviously karma coming back to bite me.

People affected by Universal Credit seem to live in poor areas. I believe the monumental disaster of Universal Credit aims to move poor people out of cities like London to let more rich city bankers move in.

I have always been a fence sitter when it came to politics and rarely voted. But now I believe that Jeremy Corbyn and Labour are the way to go.

Liam Geary  
By email

## Keep up the border fight

ON 22 December, for the first time, the United Nations and the Italian government evacuated 162 refugees from camps in Libya and flew them to Rome.

This is apparently the first of many evacuations.

It is fantastic that a safe and legal migration route from Libya to Europe has now been opened. But this is not enough.

We must continue to demand that all migrants



Border controls mean that migrants die

trapped in detention centres in Libya are immediately freed and that the borders be fully opened.

No one should have to face being locked up in squalid conditions for

moving across borders.

No one should have to face being tortured, raped, murdered or drowned for trying to reach safety.

Michael Cappellucci  
Manduria, Italy

Just a thought...

## How could we greet Trump?

LET DONALD Trump come over and we will show him what we think (Stop Trump Visit, Socialist Worker, 6 December).

Matt Crawley  
On Facebook

●MAYBE WE could collect wigs for him as a gift. One or two thousand will do.

Rozligh Smith  
On Facebook

●LONDON GET ready to make hell, love from Norway.

Peyman Piran  
On Facebook

## Boycott firms over low pay

THE INSANE profits that company makes and they treat their staff like shit (Bosses owed workers £1.7 million after avoiding minimum wage, Socialist Worker online).

Until their staff get paid properly, we should all boycott them.

Jon Long  
On Facebook

## No to the Sun in Liverpool

FANTASTIC NEWS that Liverpool postal workers are no longer delivering the Sun newspaper (Socialist Worker online).

Next the Daily Mail, then Daily Telegraph until they are all out of business!

Pam Thompson  
On Facebook

## Kick out the rail fat cats

WHAT A disgrace that the rail firms are putting up fares—again.

Jeremy Corbyn is right to say the rail should be renationalised.

Sheryl Leaper  
Leicestershire

## It's good to be called Marxist

BEFORE CHRISTMAS the Daily Mail was using the term Marxist as a term of abuse.

In a backhanded way this is a compliment.

Socialist Worker must continue to emphasise Marxist theory regularly and in simple terms.

If the 21st century is to be on our terms, these ideas need to be mainstream.

Bob Bagnall  
Leicester



**T**HE YEAR 1968 was a watershed in world history. Mass movements shook governments to their foundations. People on opposite sides of the globe took inspiration from each other's struggles.

Challenges to authority exposed what the overtly capitalist West and the Stalinist dictatorships of the Eastern Bloc had in common—and pointed towards the alternative to both.

US imperialism was humbled by the resistance in Vietnam—and by riots at home after the assassination of Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King.

Students tore up the streets of Paris to build barricades and throw cobble stones at police. Within days ten million workers had joined them in a general strike.

And working class protesters in Poland denounced those who ruled them in the name of “socialism” with chants of “Down with the red bourgeoisie”.

In Britain too universities and colleges went into occupation. And students were part of the 100,000-strong march on the US embassy in Grosvenor Square.

Revolt was contagious in 1968, and this was no coincidence.

Capitalism across the world had gone through an unprecedented boom after the Second World War. But by the late 1960s that boom was reaching its limits, sapping the legitimacy of the system.

Working class people had been told that—as Britain's Tory prime minister Harold Macmillan put it in 1957—they'd “never had it so good”. Now they wanted more, but the elite were unable to deliver.

And society was changing, for example through mass immigration and more open attitudes to sex.

### Struggled

The establishment struggled to keep up, either resisting reforms or conceding them only to fuel demands for more. In Britain the abortion, divorce and homosexuality reform acts were all passed in 1967 and the first law against racist discrimination in 1968.

As radical movements grew, millions of people began to hope for revolutionary change.

At the time much of the left and workers' movements in the West still looked to Russia and the Eastern Bloc as a socialist alternative to Western capitalism.

But this was challenged—most significantly by the “Prague Spring”.

The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia began a reform process designed to kick-start its stagnant state capitalist economy, but it also gave people more space to question their rulers.

When Russian tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia to crush these gains, many protesters in the West had to



Protesting in Paris



Factory occupation in France



Russian tanks in Prague



Sanitation workers on strike in Memphis



Riot in Derry



Anti-war march in Germany

rethink which side they were on. They had more in common with Czechoslovak workers and students than with the Russian army.

At the same time movements in the West were radicalising. After King's assassination, for example, a new generation of young black activists began to look to Black Power and the revolutionary Black Panther Party.

The International Socialists (IS), forerunner of the Socialist Workers Party, was part of a new left that sought a revolutionary alternative to both power blocks.

As Chris Harman, then a student at the London School of Economics, wrote in Socialist Worker, “In Chicago

police, supported by troops with fixed bayonets, mercilessly beat up peaceful demonstrators.

“In Prague, tanks patrol the streets while the Russian rulers boast of their intention to ‘liquidate 20,000 counter-revolutionaries’.

“There are important differences between American and Russian society, between the ‘free world’ and the ‘socialist world’.

But both are controlled by small ruling classes that use the resources of modern technology to keep down the workers who may threaten their rule.

“It proves that they at least recognise the power that will be exercised

when the mass of working people begin to take control of their own lives.”

**M**ILLIONS OF people now looked beyond the fake socialism of Stalinist Russia. Some took inspiration from Mao Zedong's China, Fidel Castro's Cuba or the different national liberation movements in the Third World.

But there was also an opening for groups such as the IS to revive Karl Marx's definition of socialism as the self-emancipation of the working class.



Resisting imperialism in Vietnam

1968 is often seen as a student revolt—and student movements did play a key role (see box). But those who disregarded the potential of workers had an almighty shock.

Trendy left wing academics and thinkers had dismissed the Western working class as having been bought off by higher living standards during the long boom.

Harman summarised a Fabian Society pamphlet as claiming that “semi-detached houses complete with garden gnomes had ‘embourgeoisified’ groups like car workers.”

But May 1968 in France saw what was then the biggest general strike in human history—with factory

occupations, and in some cities, workers' committees organising fuel and food supplies. The years that followed saw the workers' movement make dramatic gains in Britain and Italy.

1968 wasn't just a shift to the left. The right and the ruling class fought back with bloody repression and racist scapegoating—Tory Enoch Powell made his infamous “Rivers of Blood” speech. And the revolts didn't fundamentally transform society. Even in France, president Charles de Gaulle was able to regain the upper hand and decisively win a general election in June.

Reformist leaders in the Communist Party and union bureaucracy had

agreed to end the fight in exchange for large pay rises and a greater say in future negotiations.

Many workers were furious, but the genuine revolutionary left was not large or strong enough to win the argument against retreating.

There is always a battle for leadership within a movement. Some will fight hard for changes—but will shy away from confronting capitalism itself. But the clock couldn't be rolled back completely. Movements against war, racism and women's oppression won gains that we're still defending today. They should inspire us to go further next time, and turn revolt into revolution.



Black Panther members in the US

## The birth of a global struggle

**I**NTERNATIONALISM and solidarity were at the heart of 1968.

The year had barely begun when in Vietnam the National Liberation Front (NLF) or “Viet Cong” resistance showed it was possible to challenge US imperialism.

And the horror of the US occupation was laid bare to US audiences in televised footage of a South Vietnamese general executing NLF fighter Nguyen Van Lem.

Vietnamese resistance raised the question of international solidarity to the Civil Rights Movement and student movement in the US. In October 1967 over 100,000 had already marched on the Pentagon. And in 1968 the top Ivy League universities went into occupation.

### Essential

NLF officer Bui Tin later said the US anti-war movement “was essential to our strategy”.

“Support for the war from our rear was completely secure while the American rear was vulnerable,” he explained.

“Every day our leadership would listen to world news over the radio at 9am to follow the growth of the American anti-war movement.”

Mexico City hosted the Olympic



Marching against the Vietnam war in London

Games in October 1968.

On the winners' podium, black US athletes Tommy Smith and John Carlos raised their black-gloved fists in defiance during the US national anthem.

A few weeks earlier thousands of Mexican students had marched outside the stadium

against the Mexican military's occupation of the National Polytechnic Institute (NPI).

The state

responded by killing hundreds of students in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas.

One week before the massacre, cops in Northern Ireland beat a march for Catholic civil rights off the streets of Derry in British-occupied Northern

Ireland. Mickey Devine, who

would later be one of the last hunger strikers in the 1980s, never forgot the Mexican students.

He championed their cause at meetings and rallies.



## Students take the stage

**F**OR THE first time students were at the forefront of the struggle. The post-war boom had seen universities that were previously the training ground of the elite expand and open up to middle and working class students.

In Britain the number of universities more than doubled from 22 to 45 in the 1960s.

These became arenas for debating the state of the world—and for struggle.

### Rebelled

The new crop of students rebelled against the elitism of the campus establishment and found common cause with oppressed people fighting racism and imperialism.

The revolt in Paris began with student protests for more freedom on campus, against dorms segregated by gender



Student occupation of the Sorbonne

and against the Vietnam War.

Repression of those students spurred on others to act in solidarity.

Workers, who had many of their own grievances, took inspiration from them.

Some groups on the New Left looked to build “student power”.

University campuses are less strictly controlled than workplaces, and revolts

can often take off quicker there.

But students lack the power that workers' role in the economy gives them.

Without workers, students' struggles can collapse as quickly as they arise.

Students played a heroic role in 1968, but the high point came when the working class entered the stage.

### TIMELINE

**5 January**—Alexander Dubcek becomes head of Czechoslovakia's government and begins a “Prague Spring” of reforms that spur on growing dissent in the streets

**30 January**—Vietnamese resistance forces launch the Tet Offensive—a wave of surprise

attacks against the occupying US army and its allies, temporarily driving them from key cities

**1 February**—The point blank execution of Vietnamese guerilla fighter Nguyen Van Lem is caught on camera, horrifying audiences in the US

**11 February**—Sanitation workers strike against racist discrimination in Memphis

**15 March**—20,000 young workers and students fight Polish security forces in Gdansk after protests snowball into a nationwide uprising

**17 March**—Around 100,000 students march on the US embassy in London's Grosvenor Square to oppose the war on Vietnam

**4 April**—Martin Luther King is shot dead by a sniper in Memphis. Riots explode in

11 cities across the US

**11 April**—Assassination attempt on German student activist Rudi Dutschke, labelled a “public enemy” by the Bild-Zeitung newspaper. Students block deliveries with protests and clashed with the police

**29 May**—President Charles de Gaulle flees France, where ten million workers are on strike and dozens of factories are occupied

**2 August**—Russian tanks and 200,000 troops invade Czechoslovakia to topple Dubcek's government

**2 October**—Bodies pile up in Mexico City as police and the army slaughter hundreds of protesting students after a summer of mass demonstrations

**5 October**—Two days of rioting erupt in Derry, Northern Ireland, after a march for Catholics' civil

rights is batoned off the streets by the Royal Ulster Constabulary

**16 October**—Black US athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos raise black-gloved fists from the podium during the US national anthem at the Mexico City Olympics



## WHAT WE STAND FOR

These are the core politics of the Socialist Workers Party.

### INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

Under capitalism workers' labour creates all profit. A socialist society can only be constructed when the working class seizes control of the means of production and democratically plans how they are used.

### REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say.

It has to be overthrown. Capitalism systematically degrades the natural world. Ending environmental crisis means creating a new society.

### THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers.

The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based upon councils of workers' delegates and a workers' militia.

At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system.

Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

### INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries.

We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the right of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country.

In Russia the result was state capitalism, not socialism. In Eastern Europe and China a similar system was later established by Stalinist parties.

We support the struggle of workers in these countries against both private and state capitalism.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We defend the right of believers to practise their religion without state interference.

### THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party.

Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

To join us, turn to page 16 or go to [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) or phone 020 7840 5602 for more information

## SOCIALIST WORKER PUBLIC MEETINGS

# Prospects for Socialists in 2018

### ABERDEEN

Wed 10 Jan, 6pm,  
Belmont Cinema Cafe,  
49 Belmont St,  
AB10 1JS

### BARNSELEY

Thu 11 Jan, 7pm,  
YMCA,  
Blucher St,  
S70 1AP

### BIRMINGHAM:

**CITY CENTRE**  
Wed 10 Jan, 7pm,  
Birmingham LGBT Centre,  
38/40 Holloway Circus,  
B1 1EQ

### BRISTOL

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
YHA, 14 Narrow Quay,  
BS1 4QA

### BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Red Triangle Cafe,  
160 St James's St,  
BB1 1NR

### CAMBRIDGE

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
River Lane Centre,  
River Lane, CB5 8HP

### CARDIFF

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Cathays Community Centre,  
Cathays Terrace,  
CF24 4HX

### CHESTERFIELD

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Chesterfield Library,  
New Beetwell St,  
S40 1QN

### DONCASTER

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
The Womens Centre  
(Changing Lives),  
5 Princes St,  
DN1 3NJ

### EDINBURGH

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Friends Meeting House,  
7 Victoria St,  
EH1 2JL

### GLASGOW

Thu 18 Jan, 7pm,  
Avant Garde,  
33-44 King St,  
Merchant City,  
G1 5QT



MARCHING AGAINST austerity and Tory rule last summer

PICTURE: GUY SMALLMAN

### HUDDERSFIELD

Wed 10 Jan, 6.30pm,  
Brian Jackson House,  
2 New North Parade (near  
both train and bus stations),  
HD1 5JP

### LEEDS: CITY CENTRE

Thu 11 Jan, 7pm,  
The Swarthmore  
Education Centre,  
2-7 Woodhouse Square,  
LS3 1AD

### LONDON: BRENT AND HARROW

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
The Pepperpot Centre,  
1a Thorpe Close,  
Ladbroke Grove,  
W10 5XL

### LONDON: CENTRAL

Thu 11 Jan, 6.15pm,  
Room 215 UCL Foster Court  
Building, Malet Place,  
WC1E 6BT

### LONDON: EALING

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Y Lounge,  
YMCA West London,  
25 St Mary's Rd, W5 2RE

### LONDON: HACKNEY

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
The Round Chapel,  
2 Powerscroft Rd (corner  
Lower Clapton Rd),  
E5 0PU

### LONDON: HARINGEY

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
St John Vianney Church Hall,  
386 West Green Rd  
(corner Vincent Rd),  
N15 3QH

### LONDON: ISLINGTON

Thu 11 Jan, 7pm,  
The Old Fire Station,  
84 Mayton St,  
N7 6QT

### LONDON: LEWISHAM

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
West Greenwich Community  
and Arts Centre,  
141 Greenwich High Rd,  
SE10 8JA

### LONDON: NEWHAM

Wed 10 Jan, 7pm,  
Stratford Advice Arcade,  
107-109 The Grove  
(next to Morrisons car park),  
E15 1HP

### LONDON: TOWER HAMLETS

Wed 10 Jan, 7pm,  
Oxford House,  
Derbyshire St (opposite  
Bethnal Green Rd Tesco),  
E2 6HG

### MANCHESTER: CENTRAL

Wed 10 Jan, 7pm,  
Friends Meeting House,  
6 Mount St,  
M2 5NS

### MEDWAY

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Nucleus Arts Centre  
(Conference Room),  
272 High St, ME4 4BP

### OXFORD

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Restore, Manzil Way  
(off Cowley Rd),  
OX4 1YH

### POOLE AND DORCHESTER

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Dorford Centre,  
2 Bridport Rd,  
DT1 1RR

### PORTSMOUTH

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Somerstown  
Community Centre,  
River's St, PO5 4EZ

### SOUTHAMPTON

Wed 10 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Central Baptist Church Hall,  
Devonshire Rd, SO15 2GY

### SWANSEA

Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Brynmill Community Centre,  
St Albans Rd, SA20BP

### WIGAN

Wed 10 Jan, 7pm,  
Little Fifteen pub,  
17-19 Wallgate (opposite  
Wigan Post Office),  
WN1 1LD

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## New and forthcoming

### Politics of the Mind: Marxism and Mental Distress

by Iain Ferguson

Mental distress has become one of the key public issues of the 21st century. Depression currently affects 350 million people worldwide. This book looks at the link between the current political and economic system and the soaring levels of mental distress we see in the world today.



£9.99

### "Kill All the Gentlemen": Class Struggle and Change in the English Countryside

by Martin Empson

The modern countryside is the result of centuries of environmental change, but also brutal class struggle. From 1381 to the Pilgrimage of Grace that challenged Henry VIII's power, from food riots to Captain Swing, here is the story of how rural labourers resisted the development of capitalism.



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### { SOCIALIST WORKER } BRANCH MEETINGS

Weekly meetings to discuss political issues and our local interventions. All welcome.

### SHEFFIELD: CITY CENTRE Sexism and the system—the fight for women's liberation

Thu 18 Jan, 7pm,  
Central United  
Reformed Church,  
60 Norfolk St (near Crucible  
Theatre), S1 2JB

### NORWICH

**The politics of mental health**  
Thu 11 Jan, 7.30pm,  
Vauxhall Centre,  
Johnson Place,  
NR2 2SA

### { MOVEMENT EVENTS }

### NATIONAL Stand Up To Racism Trade Union Conference

Sat 10 Feb 2018,  
11am-4.30pm,  
Central London.  
Register at [bit.ly/2jj3p0p](http://bit.ly/2jj3p0p)  
**March against racism**  
Sat 17 Mar 2018,  
Demonstrations in London,  
Glasgow and Cardiff.  
Called by Stand up to Racism.  
Go to [standuptoracism.org.uk](http://standuptoracism.org.uk)  
**Marxism Festival**  
Thu 5 Jul-Sun 8 Jul 2018,  
Central London.  
[marxismfestival.org.uk](http://marxismfestival.org.uk)

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# Alexander Hamilton—an enemy of the working class

As the hit musical gets rave reviews in the West End, **Anthony Hamilton** looks at the truth behind the other Hamilton—a racist and a capitalist class fighter

**MANY PEOPLE** in Britain wouldn't have heard of Alexander Hamilton before the musical adaptation of his life was launched in 2015.

The musical depicts a life of dramatic turbulence and is based on the biography of Hamilton by Ron Chernow. He is described as a revolutionary and painted as a progressive outsider who struggled defiantly against slavery and for a strong economy to lift the US onto the international stage.

The production, written and performed by Lin-Manuel Miranda, has generated thousands of column inches. Liberals love it because it popularises and sanitises their worldview.

One review in the New York Times said, "I am loath to tell people to mortgage their houses and lease their children to acquire tickets to a hit Broadway show. But Hamilton... might just about be worth it."

Hamilton has been defended by some on the left. Compared to sexist, racist US president Donald Trump, he may have been a paragon of virtue.

But he was no friend of working class people and his vision of the US wasn't to be rid of exploitation or oppression, rather a different economic model with which slavery didn't fit.

Hamilton was born on January 11th 1757 (or possibly 1755) in Charlestown, Nevis, in the West Indies. By the age of 12 he was orphaned and had a job in a general store.

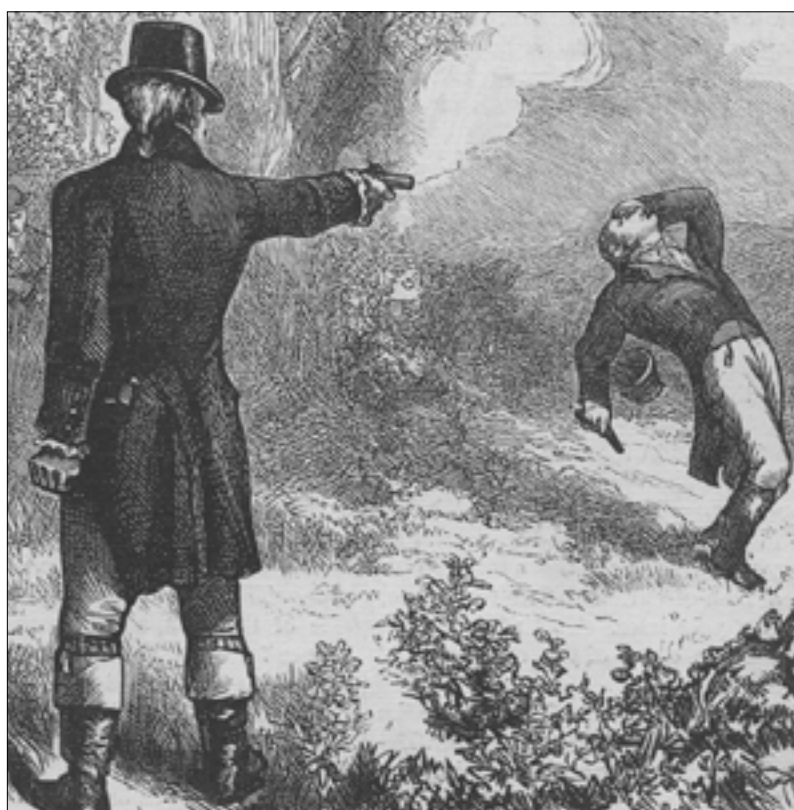
## Enrolled

In 1772, his aunts had saved enough money to send him to New York to study and the year after was enrolled in Kings College. In 1775, he began his military career and in 1776 named Captain of the Provincial Company on New York Artillery.

This struggle from modest beginnings to leading in the American military during the war for independence is championed as a momentous individual achievement that we should all look up to.



**Hamilton fought against the bill of rights and referred to democracy as the 'real disease'**



**A DRAWING** of Aaron Burr killing Alexander Hamilton (above) and Lin-Manuel Miranda as Hamilton (left)

and arbitrary rule."

After his military career, he turned to law before politics, regularly clashing with other leading members like Jefferson and Washington.

He was a founding member of the New York Manumission society, a group made up of wealthy white men from New York who campaigned against slavery through legislation even though some of the members owned slaves or had made their fortunes through slavery.

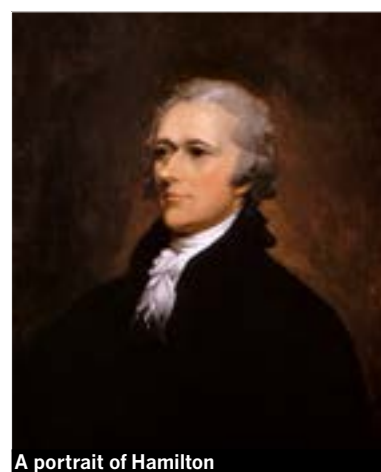
This contradiction summed up the politics of the group, and would lead to the US Civil War.

Their objection to slavery wasn't on the grounds that it was unjust. They wanted to break from the relatively inefficient and largely monocultural production of the Southern slave states so that the US could compete on a world stage.

They lobbied for the state of New York to abolish slavery and eventually won that all children of slaves would be freed and to stop the exportation of slaves.

However, the law stated that the same children would have to serve their mother's owner until 28 for males, and age 25 for females.

There was also nothing listed in the law which dealt with slaves once they were freed as the issue was too



**A portrait** of Hamilton

contentious.

After years of scandal including resigning his position Hamilton was eventually killed in a duel with vice president Aaron Burr on July 11th 1804.

The musical takes the life of Hamilton as a re-imagining of American history in an attempt to relate to current conditions.

Mike Pence watched the show in New York. The producers wrote an announcement which said, "We truly hope that our show has inspired you to uphold our American values and to work on behalf of all of us."

## Shamed

It was hailed as a blow against the Trump administration by shaming it. But liberal self-righteousness won't get the change we need. Donald Trump, Mike Pence and the rest of them can't be shamed to change their ways because they have no shame.

And fawning over Hamilton as a progressive figure is way off the mark. In the lyrics between characters Lafayette and Hamilton say "We've had quite a run. Immigrants... we get the job done!"

Hamilton actually made it difficult for immigrants to become citizens and referred to them as "aliens" in letters to his friend Timothy Pickering. "The mass ought to be obliged to leave the country," he wrote.

The show has been lauded for its use of rapping to tell the story.

Miranda says he wrote it this way because Hamilton reminded him of Tupac. But Tupac was a staunch critic of the US state and his mother was a Black Panther.

Hamilton was a pioneering capitalist who fought against the bill of rights. The day before his death he referred to democracy as the "real disease".

The story of Hamilton is not one that should be celebrated and promoted.

## Theatre highlights

**THE MANIFESTO** for an Independent Revolutionary Art, signed by French writer André Breton and Mexican painter Diego Rivera was published in 1938.

The Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky is also believed to be one of its authors.

The Manifesto argues for "complete freedom for art" and asserts that "true art" expresses "the inner needs" of humanity."

Good theatre productions start from what Trotsky called "the law of art"—the free expression of the human spirit. And not from unambiguous political point making.

The following shows could live up to that ambition.

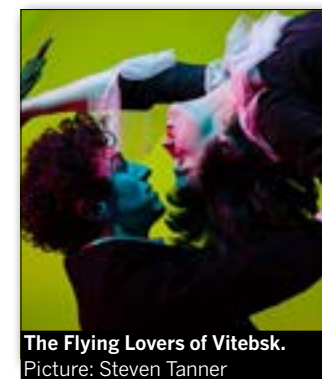
## Technology

**In The Encounter** by Complicité (Barbican, London, 15 April to 5 May) uses solo performance and extraordinary sound technology. They combine to evoke the real life meeting of an American photographer and an isolated Amazonian tribe.

It is one of the most impressive productions in recent years.

**The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk** (touring England, 17 January to 5 May) is by Cornwall-based company Kneehigh. It is a beautiful evocation of the life of the painter Marc Chagall.

The late Scottish poet Edwin Morgan's version of the French classic *Cyrano de Bergerac* (touring Scotland, 1 September



**The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk.** Picture: Steven Tanner

to 11 November) will be staged for the National Theatre of Scotland by the outstanding director Dominic Hill.

Finally, **Girls & Boys** (Royal Court, London, 8 February to March 10) is the latest play by Dennis Kelly, author of the excellent *After the End*. Expect an intense and disquieting drama of human relations.

**Mark Brown**



**O**UR health is shaped by the world around us — and capitalism has a profound impact on mental health.

That's the central argument of Iain Ferguson's new book *Politics of the Mind—Marxism and Mental Distress*.

He explores how ideas in wider society relate to diagnosis and treatment of mental illness, and in doing so makes a compelling case for socialism.

One of his arguments is that capitalism is “responsible for the enormously high levels of mental health problems which we see in the world today”.

The World Health Organisation says depression now affects “350 million people worldwide and by 2020 will be the leading cause of disability in the world”.

Iain says that “although sadness and grief are likely to affect people in any type of civilisation,” prior to capitalism “you wouldn't see such high rates of depression and mental distress”.

Capitalism is a form of society based on exploitation and that makes all the difference.

It is too simplistic to say that it causes all forms of mental health problems. Even in a socialist society there would still be unhappiness. And there is a biological basis to some conditions.

But capitalism plays a role in developing these into serious mental health problems and making it harder for people to cope with them.

If you are poor and if you are oppressed, you are more likely to suffer mental distress.

The effects of austerity add enormous pressure.

Greece had one of the lowest suicide rates in Europe before the financial crash of 2008, Iain explains. It then went up by 60 percent.

### Oppressed

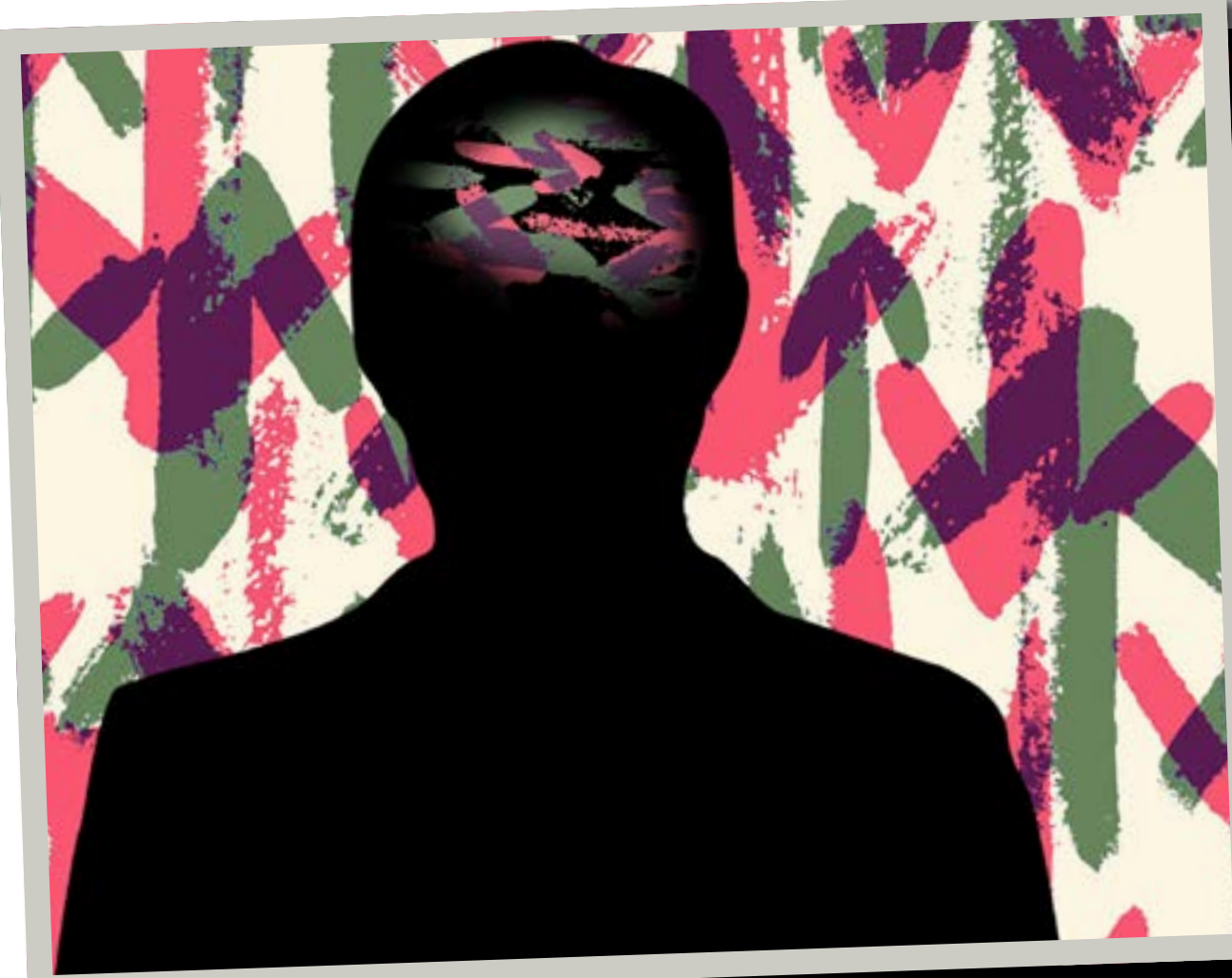
Oppressed groups also suffer disproportionately from mental health problems. Anxiety is more prominent in women than men. Black people are more likely than whites to be diagnosed with psychosis.

This partly reflects racist and sexist bias in diagnosis. The same symptoms can sometimes be viewed differently depending on whether they occur in a man or a woman, a black person or a white person.

But racist and sexist oppression can also have real effects on people's mental health.

Class is also a powerful factor. Iain explores how living in poverty means that children's brains develop differently than those whose parents have a higher income bracket.

He cites researchers in arguing that “the key factor shaping



# SYMPTOM OF A SICK SOCIETY

If you're experiencing mental distress, the problem might be capitalism. A new book by Iain Ferguson looks at the struggles around mental health, writes Sarah Bates



Iain Ferguson

children's neurological—as well as social, emotional, and cognitive development—is class.”

The effects of capitalism aren't reducible to the experience of living in poverty, but the wholesale impact of a society based on exploitation and capital accumulation.

Iain uses Karl Marx's theory of alienation to explain this.

Marx saw humans as defined by labour—our ability to consciously act on and change the world around us.



**Capitalism denies workers any control over their labour or their lives**

But capitalism denies workers any control over the process or the result of their labour.

This lack of control stunts our creativity and imagination and has “devastating effects” on how people feel about their life, Iain writes.

Capitalism also alienates us from each other from each other. Humans are social beings who live and work together.

But capitalism means competition that pits workers against each other. Artificial

competition for jobs or resources creates the material conditions for divisive ideas, such as homophobia or racism.

Iain argues that the loss of control begins in the workplace “but shapes every aspect of life under capitalism”—including mental health.

It is no wonder people feel powerless in a system where they are denied opportunities to make real decisions.

Capitalism needs workers in order to function—and the developing capitalist class of the 19th century wanted to separate those who could work, and those who were unable.

So they looked for an “institutional solution” that resulted in workhouses, prisons and asylums.

Horror at the conditions in which people have been institutionalised, often against their will, was part of what drove a shift towards “care in the community”.

**B**UT community care can be a way of reducing, not improving, mental health services.

The number of mental hospital beds “fell from 150,000 in 1955 to 22,300 in 2012.” And psychiatric beds dropped by 39 percent between 1998 and 2012.

Today in Britain, Tory austerity is causing a crisis of care. Mental health services have been cut by 8 percent in the last decade, while referrals have risen by 20 percent.

There have been many debates, including on the left, about how to understand mental health and distress. These often focus on how much is about the biology of someone's brain and how much is about the effect of social factors.

Underlying this is a tension between the need to fight for services in the face of cuts and the need to defend people's rights from attempts to dismiss or override them.

The way mental health treatment has changed also reflects the changing dominant ideas in society.

Iain describes the “anti-psychiatry” movement of RD Laing that challenged dominant ideas about psychiatry in the 1960s.

Laing argued that those suffering apparent mental ill health were in fact reacting to the world around them.

Laing saw mental distress partly as a reaction to how people experience their place in the family and the operations of wider capitalist society.

The anti-psychiatry movement was part of “the social struggles of the 1960s” that “also led to a questioning of the whole spectrum of dominant ideas”.

In Britain today the “medical model” is the dominant ideology about mental distress. It sees mental distress in terms of distinct and diagnosable illnesses. One of the ways

people are diagnosed is through health practitioners using a book called the *Diagnostics and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM)*

It lists hundreds of disorders, themselves described through lists of symptoms—not the mechanisms that cause them.

And, for example, if a person matches five out of eight symptoms of depression, they are likely diagnosed as such.

Iain argues that the DSM has contributed to the “medicalisation of human nature”.

For example, grief was included in a recent edition of the DSM. But bereavement and loss are normal parts of human experience.

This focus on medicalisation can be used to dismiss the social causes of mental distress.

And it reinforces a bias in treatments, away from talking therapies and towards prescribing drugs.

Drugs can sometimes play an important rule. But it's obviously beneficial for the pharmaceutical industry to have tools such as DSM used widely.

And half of the DSM's authors have had “financial relationships with the pharmaceutical industry at one time”.

### Treatment

Sometimes getting a diagnosis is the only way to get treatment. But a unifying factor for a lot of mental health service users is an experience of “not being listened to and of views and experiences being discounted and invalidated”.

Iain argues passionately for treatment where people are seriously listened to, rather than simply observed enough to be put in the right box.

It is partly this experience of being ignored that has led to a mental health service user's movement to fight their oppression—in larger numbers than ever before.

Groups like the Mental Health Resistance Network also operate with an additional challenge—mental distress of the activists themselves.

The campaigning motto “nothing about us without us” sums up the struggle for a user-centred approach. With capitalism central to the problem, the solution has to include fighting capitalism.

Iain points to a correlation “between the level of class



The controversial RD Laing (top), a woman suffering depression (above),  
PICTURE: TIME TO CHANGE),  
protester (below)

struggle and the levels of mental health problems in society”.

So people's mental health can be affected by the experience of fighting back—feeling less powerless, and less isolated.

If people had the opportunity to create a society organised in their interests, that would make an enormous difference.

The current levels of mental distress are not inevitable.

Socialists should be part of struggles for better services in the here and now.

But the biggest improvements to mental health can be won through fighting for a society that gives people genuine control over their lives.

## READ MORE

● **Cuts make services 'unsafe'** [bit.ly/2lVeTnf](https://bit.ly/2lVeTnf)

● **Mental health matters** [bit.ly/2l3lznD](https://bit.ly/2l3lznD)

● **Disability—produced by profit** [bit.ly/2z3PwBL](https://bit.ly/2z3PwBL)

● **Capitalism, class, health and medicine** [bit.ly/2z2DSOn](https://bit.ly/2z2DSOn)

● **Politics of the mind: Marxism and mental distress** by Iain Ferguson £9.99

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## As Labour draws closer to office—beware the soft left

Nick Clark looks at the history of how the soft left in Labour has sold out struggle as a warning for today

THE LABOUR right would love to thrust a knife in Jeremy Corbyn's back. But when the time comes, they'll leave it to the “soft left” to strike the first blow.

Corbyn and the left in Labour have some untrustworthy allies.

Soft left Labour MPs such as Angela Rayner and Emily Thornberry have given Corbyn some crucial support. They were among the few Labour politicians who supported Corbyn when most other MPs were trying to force him out.

Yet the soft left is also responsible for delivering many of the Labour leadership's most significant recent concessions to the right.

For instance Thornberry, the shadow foreign secretary, recently said Britain's relationship with Israel would “remain strong” under a Labour government.

She even said that selling arms to Israel was “entirely in line” with Labour's policy.

### Workers

In September Rayner, the shadow education secretary, said Labour couldn't give public sector workers a 5 percent pay increase to make up for years of cuts.

And soft left MP Clive Lewis was responsible for ensuring Labour kept its support for Trident nuclear weapons despite Corbyn's lifetime opposition. The Labour leadership will come under increasing pressure to make such concessions as the party gets closer to being elected to government. Top civil servants, bankers and bosses want to know Labour will govern “responsibly”.

In other words they want the party to drop plans for nationalisations and higher taxes on businesses and to keep support for Britain's military alliances. Meanwhile the Labour right wants Corbyn to prove Labour

is “electable” by chasing after right wing votes on issues such as immigration.

It may suit Corbyn to allow the soft left to make those concessions publicly rather than be seen to do it himself.

But the soft left can also be a danger to him and his supporters.

For instance before the general election Lewis—encouraged by soft left columnist Owen Jones—looked set to challenge Corbyn's leadership.

More recently Rayner took a veiled swipe at Labour activists campaigning to defend council housing in Haringey, north London.

She echoed right wing accusations of “factionalism” made against the left.

Her attack pointed to the major contradiction at the heart of the Labour Party, which the soft left is a product of.

Labour aims to represent working class people in parliament, and push through left wing, social democratic reforms.

But getting elected and governing through parliament comes with the pressure to govern “responsibly”.

The soft left, seeing parliament as the only way to make such changes, accepts those limitations—and are ultimately guided by them.

So when it comes down to it, they'll always side with the right against the left when they start to run up against those limitations.

### Joined

There's precedent for this in Labour's history. In the early to mid-1980s the soft left joined forces with the right to stop the rise of Bennisism.

Left wing MP Tony Benn



**The soft left is responsible for many of Corbyn's concessions to the right**

had huge support from party members when he challenged right wing Denis Healey for deputy leader.

But the soft left split over whether to back him. Two of the most influential soft left MPs, Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock, led the charge against Benn.

Benn eventually lost by a tiny margin.

Electoral defeats for Labour strengthened the pull on left wing activists.

Benn's focus on parliament meant he had no effective alternative to the pressures that eventually convinced many of his supporters they had to move rightwards.

These pressures give the right and the soft left control of Labour.

Resisting them means breaking free of the focus on parliament.

The Labour left, and Corbyn, are strongest when looking to the workplaces and the streets for their strength.



# Labour members target Louise Harrison

by SADIE ROBINSON

**LOUISE HARRISON, a domestic violence worker and campaigner in South Yorkshire, could be dismissed from her job because Labour members want to protect their party.**

Louise works at South Yorkshire Women's Aid in Doncaster, which faces closure because the Labour council has refused to continue funding it.

She led a successful campaign to defend the service when it was previously under threat. And this year she has been key to raising thousands of pounds from trade unionists and others to try and keep the service going.

## Intervene

Pressure from the campaign even led to shadow chancellor John McDonnell pledging to intervene to save the service. He called the campaign "an inspiration".

Yet Louise received a letter from the service's trustees, who are Labour Party members, just days before Christmas informing her



CAMPAIGNING TO save Women's Aid in Doncaster in 2016

PICTURE: NEIL TERRY

that her contract may not be renewed. She was off work due to exhaustion, stress and a family bereavement at the time.

Campaigners and women who have used the service are furious. A statement from the Women's Lives Matter group

said, "The letter insinuates that some of the trustees are unhappy with the service she has been providing women."

"Louise is on a fixed term contract which would need to be renewed at the end of the year. The trustees make allegations which put Louise's

renewal at risk.

"However, we are not surprised that this has come at a key point in the campaign to save the service."

It said the trustees have tried to "water down" the campaign to save the service and put pressure on cam-

paigners to "stay positive about the council".

"The trustees have clearly been put under pressure from the council and have bought the right wing Labour line that Louise and other campaigners are scuppering the chances of SYWA funding."

The statement refers to a meeting involving Rosie Winterton MP. Winterton allegedly alluded to "volunteers and staff militantly leading a campaign to save the service and that this could make the service unattractive for funders and clients".

Jane was able to escape a violent relationship because of the service.

She told Socialist Worker, "It frightens me that people who are supposed to be acting in our best interests are being so vicious towards someone who has been instrumental in saving this service."

"They are putting their personal gain over the lives of women and girls in the constituency. Certain individuals in Doncaster want control of all matters locally and will stop at nothing to keep that control."

Louise said, "I am deeply

shocked about the inference in the letter that I have let women down."

"For the past seven months I have worked largely unpaid to try to secure funding for our service with little or no support from some of the trustees."

## Support

A Stand Up For Louise Harrison Campaign Group has been set up and is mobilising to build support. Doncaster's Labour MPs and the council should support the women's aid service and defend Louise.

Jane said, "These councillors don't act in a way that echoes the views of Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell."

"Attacking this woman is an attack on all women. I feel that it is an extension of the abuse that we are trying to escape from."

Jane's name has been changed. For more details of the campaign contact Amy Cousens on amycousens123@gmail.com or 07517 207 061. Sign the petition to defend Louise at [you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stand-up-for-louise-harrison-south-yorkshire-women-s-aid](http://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stand-up-for-louise-harrison-south-yorkshire-women-s-aid)

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# New equalities report shows institutional racism in NHS

The latest equalities figures show that black workers in the NHS aren't reaching the highest pay rates—and are more likely to be disciplined, explains **Tomáš Tengely-Evans**

**THE NHS was built by black and asian workers and still relies on migrants to run. But despite fights against racism, they still face institutional discrimination in the health service.**

A national survey found that staff from a black and minority ethnicity (BME) background said they were “more likely to state that they have experience discrimination from their manager”.

And the figures in east London reveal what this looks like on the ground.

Barts Health NHS Trust spans three of the most multiethnic London boroughs—Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest. But the trust's Inclusion Matters—equalities report 2016 also reveals institutional racism.

The report admits that “under-representation of women and BME colleagues beyond pay band 7” is a major issue. Pay band 7 represents senior physicians who are paid more than £40,000 a year.

## Harder

A black worker at one of the hospitals in the trust told Socialist Worker, “I love my job.

“But I know as that I will find it harder to move up the scale. Look around at the managers. They are mostly white.”

Among the higher pay brackets the proportion of whites only falls below 50 percent among doctors and junior doctors.

That's because the NHS has relied on Asian doctors for much of its history due to labour shortages.

The situation is likely to be worse as the figures don't take into account outsourced workers, many of whom are migrants and black (see box



**THE LATEST** report shows that black workers don't reach the highest paying grades

below). There has been some movement from the lowest paid brackets, but being promoted into the high bands is still a problem.

The top pay bracket is “not reflected at all within black, Chinese or mixed staff and has a 0.4 percent representation of Asian staff”.

A Unison member at one of the hospitals in Barts Trust says, “If you're black you will, on average, be paid less, be less likely to be in a

high grade, find it harder to reach a top post and be more likely to be disciplined.

“That's a structural problem and it's a management problem.”

And in the 2015 national staff survey 56.5 percent of respondents reported that Homerton hospital “does not act fairly with regard to career progression/promotion”.

But there is one area where BME health workers are

overrepresented—disciplinary procedures. Out of 142 disciplinary cases in 2016, 59 percent were against BME workers compared to 18 percent against white workers.

The report suggests “career development programmes” and other measures to remedy the inequalities.

But the figures reflect wider racism within society—and it will take a fight by black and white workers to push it back.

## Women paid less than men

**PAY** discrimination against women also runs through the health service.

At the Homerton some 78 percent of workers are female and 22 percent are male.

But 92 percent of women workers earn between £16,000 and £45,000, compared to 79 percent of male workers.

“Women are more likely to be represented in the lowest paid groups,” the report notes.

And if women are able to reach the top of the pay scale, these differences only increase sharply.

As the report said, “It is interesting to note that in a mostly female workforce, men are better represented in senior posts.”

“From £46,000 onwards the proportion of women in the higher pay bands decreases whilst male representation increases to significantly higher levels.”

Pay band 9—the highest one—is made up of just three men. This is also a reflection of wider problem of pay discrimination in Britain.

The gender pay gap fell to its lowest figure in January 2017. But it currently is still 9 percent, meaning women on average earn £100 a week less.

A Unison member at one of the Barts Trust hospitals says “Unions can't ignore this.

“Part of fighting for pay and conditions is to recognise and confront this.”

## We can win against outsourcing healthcare bosses

**EQUALITY** figures for Barts Health NHS Trust in east London do not include outsourced workers.

They are often at the sharp end of discrimination.

But at Barts low paid, mainly migrant workers fought against multinational giant Serco in east London earlier this year.

The Barts report noted that “BME colleagues” are “more likely to report experiencing discrimination from managers and other

colleagues”.

Majorie, a domestic worker at the Royal London Hospital, spoke to Socialist Worker at the time of the Serco dispute. “They are making money off us, off our suffering,” she said.

## Respect

“They don't treat us with any respect—we're not people to them.

“We're the ones that clean the shit and they treat us like shit—we deserve to be paid properly.”

Many workers were left



Outsourcing cleaners on a strike against low pay in July

frustrated by the final deal and they could have won more with proper backing from the Unite union's national leadership.

But they showed it was possible for unions to organise low paid, migrant and black workers to fight against poverty pay.

Building on that example can help challenge discrimination in the NHS.

But it will take a national fight by the health unions against racism, low pay and outsourcing to overturn inequality for black workers.

PICTURE: GUY SHALLMAN



## IN BRIEF

**Campaign defends fire safety and jobs**

FIRE BOSSES in North Yorkshire have been forced to abandon planned cuts. North Yorkshire fire authority wanted to reduce the number of firefighters on board Tactical Response Vehicles.

But at a meeting last month authority members voted to drop the plans. FBU union brigade secretary Steve Howley said, "This is an enormous accomplishment and has only been made possible as a result of the relentless campaigning by FBU members."

**Deaf and disabled resist Tory attack**

THE GOVERNMENT faces a legal challenge to its plans to cut a scheme helping deaf and disabled people find and keep jobs, the Access to Work (ATW) scheme.

Those who claim the most on ATW are typically deaf people who need sign language interpreters.

They will be placed at a disadvantage by a cap the Tories want to impose.

Ellen Clifford, Inclusion London's campaigns and policy manager, said, "On the one hand the government says they want to reduce the disability employment gap.

"Yet here is a disability employment scheme with a track record of success and it is being cut and changed to a point where it is no longer a viable form of support."

**Uber driven out of York taxi trade**

TAXI FIRM Uber faced another setback in December when it lost its licence to operate in York—the third city in Britain to do so after London and Sheffield.

Uber is appealing the decision in London and the Sheffield decision was temporary. But it's another sign of the clamour for proper treatment of Uber workers.

**No to low pay for BT agency workers**

MEMBERS OF the CWU union lobbied parliament last month over low pay for agency workers in the telecoms industry.

It was part of the union's Close the Gap campaign which demands equal pay for telecom workers in BT.

**Protest against the cuts in Dundee**

DUNDEE TRADE unionists and campaigners are set to protest as a key council committee discusses the budget.

Some £20 million looks set to be cut, and workers are also worried about redundancies and the outsourcing of 300 council employees to Tayside Contracts.

●Demonstrate Monday 8 January, 5.30pm, City Square

## NHS WORKERS



**OUTSOURCED HOSPITAL cleaners in south London kickstarted their campaign for the London Living Wage last month. Campaigners fighting cuts at King's hospital, pictured, joined their rally 18 December. More at [bit.ly/2zXQe7u](http://bit.ly/2zXQe7u)**

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

## JOURNALISTS

# Strike as Newsquest slashes pay and jobs

by **NICK CLARK** in Swindon

JOURNALISTS working on regional newspapers in Swindon and Darlington are fighting against a raft of job cuts by bosses at publisher Newsquest.

The cuts are part of a sustained attack on jobs and pay that has lasted several years.

Members of the NUJ union at the Newsquest-owned Swindon Advertiser struck over low pay on Tuesday of this week and were set to strike again on Wednesday.

The union's Swindon chapel said the paper's reporters were "among the lowest paid on a daily title" in Britain.

Yet Newsquest chief executive Henry Faure Walker has been paid more than £1 million in pay and perks.

Bruno Clements was social media and web editor at the Advertiser until he was made redundant on New Year's Eve.

He told Socialist Worker, "We were told about the redundancies at the end of November. It's not a very nice thing to happen to the five of us



**On the picket line in Swindon**

PICTURE: SOCIALIST WORKER

affected just before Christmas."

He added, "Rent in Swindon is going up considerably. Wage rises are failing to keep pace with inflation.

"Reporters and other journalists are struggling to rent. How can you cover an area if you can't live in it?"

"Oxfordshire and Wiltshire Newsquest is making operating profits of about £4 million this year.

"We say there should be more money and resources

going to the staff."

Meanwhile, NUJ members at the Newsquest-owned papers in Darlington have also voted to strike. There were no dates for action as Socialist Worker went to press.

Newsquest wants to cut the number of newsdesk positions at the Northern Echo from three people to one. Two copy editor roles at weekly newspapers are also under threat.

●Messages of support to [campaigns@nuj.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nuj.org.uk)

## HOUSING AND LABOUR

## McDonnell calls for rethink on the HDV

THE BATTLE in Haringey, north London, over the HDV social cleansing deal continues.

Over 200 people came at short notice to hear shadow chancellor John McDonnell address a Haringey Labour Party meeting before Christmas.

McDonnell attacked the Tory austerity programme, saying that local government has borne the brunt of cuts, and warned of a second wave of austerity to come.

However, McDonnell also

said that the fight against austerity can no longer be won by councils setting needs-based budgets, which he called illegal.

The role of Labour councils, he said, was to protect services and to lead the fight against cuts by mobilising communities to protest, demonstrate and occupy.

Contributions from the floor called for national support against the leadership of Haringey council over the HDV.

McDonnell said the council had to listen to the rank and file members and local MPs "who are very clear on this, that is they don't want this to go ahead".

Anti-HDV campaigners are worried that the discredited council leadership intends to sign contracts with developer Lendlease that will lock in privatisation and sell-off plans.

The fight against the HDV is not over.

**Jenny Sutton and Simon Hester**

## UCU UNION

## FE lecturers should vote for coordinated pay strikes

by **SADIE ROBINSON**

UCU UNION members in 19 further education (FE) colleges are set to ballot for strikes over pay. The ballots will begin around 12 January.

Some of the colleges are also in dispute over conditions.

Bosses have offered a below-inflation 1 percent pay deal following years of real terms pay cuts.

The UCU says FE workers have suffered a 23.6 percent real terms cut in pay since 2008.

Workers are demanding a pay rise of the RPI rate of inflation as of 1 August 2017 plus 3 percent on all pay points.

The ballots follow a national consultative ballot of UCU members in FE colleges that saw a 75 percent vote for action.

The union's national executive committee had previously decided that

consultative ballots must achieve a 50 percent turnout in order to lead to a national strike ballot.

The colleges set to ballot for strikes are Hackney, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets, Havering, South Thames, Carshalton, Kingston, Epping Forest, Sandwell, City of Westminster, College of North West London, Sussex Coast College Hastings, Sunderland, Richmond-upon-Thames, City and Islington, Westminster Kingsway, College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London, Croydon and Lambeth.

■A BALLOT of higher education lecturers for strikes over pensions is due to end on 19 January.

The ballot involves UCU union members in older universities who are part of the defined benefit scheme.

Bosses' plans could slash the value of workers' pensions by half.

## SCHOOLS

## Newham against academies

NEU UNION members at Royal Docks Community School in Newham, east London, struck on Wednesday 13 December. They are fighting plans to turn the school into an academy.

Over 25 pickets and supporters turned out. Louise Regan, president of the NEU for the NUT section, congratulated the union group on closing the school.

NEU members leafleted the area, aware that parents knew little of what was happening.

The strike will bring it to their attention, but organising parents at secondary schools is a challenge.

The strike comes as another Newham school, Cumberland Secondary,

has voted overwhelmingly for strikes against academisation. Some 69 percent backed strikes in a ballot on a turnout of 75 percent.

Workers plan to strike in the second week of the new term. And union members at Avenue School, also in Newham, struck on Thursday 14 December over the same issue.

Teachers, parents and others protested outside Hallsville School on Radland Road on Wednesday 20 December. The school became part of a Multi Academy Trust on 1 January.

●Please send messages of support for the Newham strikers to [assistant.secretary.nta@gmail.com](mailto:assistant.secretary.nta@gmail.com)

## BRENT

NEU UNION members at the Village School in Brent, west London, struck on Thursday 14 December against academy plans.

Around 70 strikers joined picket lines.

Workers face a proposal to turn the school into an academy that would be part of a Multi Academy Trust.

One NEU member said there was a "determined mood" among strikers and that pickets won a lot of support from passing drivers. The NEU at the school had 32 members in September but, in further evidence that action builds unions, it now has 125.

Workers have joined in order to be part of the strike.

●Please send messages of support for the strikers to [hank.roberts@neu.org.uk](mailto:hank.roberts@neu.org.uk)

## SHEFFIELD

STRIKING WORKERS at Westways Primary School in Sheffield have unanimously voted to suspend further action following significant progress in their dispute.

The NEU union members are fighting over workload and other issues.

Management has now accepted the principle of a union's right to negotiate on any collective matter of concern to its members.

Workers struck on Tuesday 12 December.

They held a successful two-day strike the previous week. Workers oppose changes in the school including a shorter playtime for early years children and Sats-style tests every half term in years three to five.

●Sign the petition to support the workers at [bit.ly/2i4lp10](http://bit.ly/2i4lp10)



## TRANSPORT WORKERS

# Mass picket drives point home to First bus bosses

by SARAH BATES

**UNITE UNION members at the First Manchester bus depot in Rusholme are fighting on for pay parity. They are set to strike on Monday—their 13th strike week.**

They struck on 20, 22 and 23 December.

Some 70 drivers at the depot are paid less than other drivers doing the same job in different depots.

Rusholme drivers earn up to £5,000 a year less than drivers at another First Manchester depot just two miles down the road.

The pay disparity dates back to 2013, when Arriva took over the depot from coach operator Finglands.

Initially drivers struck for just one day a week, but escalated the action to every Monday, Wednesday and Friday last month.

## Services

The escalation was an attempt to break the bosses' army of scab managers that were running some services.

Strike breakers were brought in from as far afield as Scotland and Bristol.

But the strike is so solid that bosses can only run a heavily reduced service during the walkouts—and sometimes are unable to do even that.

Trade unionists joined a mass picket on 20 December, and blocked buses from leaving the depot.

Delegations from CWU, PCS, Unison and Unite Community unions and Manchester trades council helped



**PICKETS STOPPED** buses from leaving the depot

lift the strikers' spirits. The picket was called by Manchester and Trafford Momentum and followed a solidarity social for strikers organised by Unite the Resistance.

Unite reps met with management during the week of strikes but were unable to reach an agreement. More strikes can win the pay parity Rusholme drivers deserve.

●Join the picket line, Monday 8 January, from 4am. Go to Facebook event **First Manchester Rusholme Strike Action Week 13**

■**BUS DRIVERS** have voted by around two to one to accept Arriva North West bosses' new two year pay offer—bringing an end to a three-month long dispute. The result meant

a planned four day strike in the week before Christmas was called off. Some 2,000 workers in Merseyside and Greater Manchester held 11 strikes.

Unite and GMB union members won a rise of 3.2 percent for the first year and 2.6 percent in the second year.

The two-year deal would mean a pay increase for all depots. But it does not address the pay disparity that was part of the fight.

Merseyside depots will be paid up to 68p an hour more than workers in Bolton doing the same job.

The unions haven't released figures from the ballot. But posts on social media suggest the Unite members voted 1,286 to accept and 547 to reject.

More could have been won if strikes had continued through Christmas. The battle must go on to level up and win equal pay for all.

■**RMT UNION** members on the Arriva Cross Country railway network are continuing their strikes over rostering abuses and Sunday working.

They've already struck for seven Sundays.

This has had a huge impact on the network, with some stations unable to run any Cross Country services.

And in a separate dispute the TSSA transport union members on Cross Country may strike over pay.

Ballot papers went out on 28 December and the TSSA is recommending that its members now vote to strike.

## POSTAL WORKERS

# Unofficial walkouts hit mail centres

POSTAL WORKERS walked out unofficially last month in Inverclyde in Scotland and St Austell in Cornwall to defend workers targeted by management.

More than 100 workers in Inverclyde struck on

18 December after bosses gave a worker a formal warning. Management said the amount of time the worker had taken off following his mother's death had been "excessive".

The workers in St Austell walked out briefly on 21 December after bosses sacked one worker over sickness issues. They returned to work when bosses promised to fast track the workers' appeal.

Both strikes came amid ongoing talks between bosses and CWU union leaders over pensions, pay and conditions.

A planned two-day national strike was called off after bosses took the CWU to court and forced it into a "mediation process".

Talks continued after the mediation process ended and management made some concessions.

CWU deputy general secretary Terry Pullinger said, "While these talks are positive they are also precariously balanced. At any point these talks could break down."

He added, "It's important to note that the business has made two new offers" on pay, but that these were "insufficient".

More talks were set to take place on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

## CIVIL SERVICE WORKERS

# Plymouth jobcentre walks out over Tory closure plan

PCS UNION members at a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefit centre in Plymouth struck for two days last month.

They are fighting against the closure of their office.

Robin Nicholl, south west England regional DWP organiser for the PCS, told Socialist Worker the strike had been well supported. "There were very few people at work so it's had an impact," he said.

The planned closure and relocation is part of a national wave of cuts hitting benefit and jobcentres.

Robin explained that the closure could force many workers out of their jobs. "There are 350 workers that the department is

looking to relocate from the office in the city centre to a site in the north of the city.

"It puts a number of people out of reasonable daily travel, so they're left at risk of redundancy."

He added, "Thirty people have already been given notice of voluntary redundancy. Some aren't prepared to take it so are at risk of being made compulsorily redundant".

Bosses' uncompromising attitude underlines the need for national action across the DWP against the cuts.

●Send messages of support to the DWP group office at Leeds@pcs.org.uk Send donations to 3rd Floor, Town Centre House, Merriion Centre, Leeds, LS2 8LY

## MUSEUM WORKERS

# Bosses' mean time change sees strike in Greenwich

WORKERS AT the Royal Museums Greenwich struck on New Year's Day over changes to their contracts.

The Prospect union members work as visitor and sales assistants at the National Maritime Museum, Queen's House and Royal Observatory Greenwich in south east London.

The changes include workers losing their entitlement to paid breaks.

## Extra

That means effectively working an extra three weeks a year without any compensation.

The hours within which their shifts can fall have also been extended.

Shifts had previously been between 9.30am to 5.15pm. But the new contracts

mean shifts can be anywhere within an 8am to 8pm window.

Although the union negotiated an "up to 3 percent" pay rise, workers would have been better off without the pay rise if they had kept their paid breaks.

Workers voted by 85 percent for strikes on a 68 percent turnout.

A Prospect statement said, "The aim is not to stop the public from visiting the Museum but to highlight the treatment our members are facing."

Workers only struck for one day. It is likely to take more than that to win the dispute.

Disrupting the running of the museums through strikes is a key tool at workers' disposal.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

# Homecare workers vote for action over jobs cut

AROUND 350 home care workers in Birmingham have voted by 99 percent for strikes over redundancies and a new rota system.

The Tories have continued to cut budgets for social care. In Birmingham we have gone from a social care workforce of over 7,000 in 2010 to fewer than 2,000 now.

Labour-run Birmingham council now plans to make 40 percent of our home care workers redundant.

They also plan to introduce an unacceptable work pattern.

Workers would be expected to work three split shifts in a day—7-10am, 12-2pm and then 4-10pm.

Many won't be able to get home between shifts, meaning they won't get a break at all.

Home carers earn between £15,823 and £18,560 a year. Many have to take on second jobs to survive.

They want to provide the best care they can for society's most vulnerable.

But workers know that if they are forced to work the new rotas, it will make the job they do so much harder.

by **Caroline Johnson**, Unison union Birmingham branch secretary (personal capacity)

●Send messages of support to info@birminghamunison.co.uk Make out donations to Birmingham UNISON and make it clear that it's for the Hardship Fund and post to UNISON Birmingham Branch, The McLaren Building, 46 The Priory, Queensway, Birmingham, B4 7LR



# Strikes on six lines as guards fight on

by SARAH BATES

**TWENTY FIVE** years since rail privatisation began, passengers face huge fare increases, poor service and bosses axing vital staff. But there is also resistance and a new round of coordinated strikes.

The RMT transport union called protests at dozens of train stations on Tuesday to highlight recent fare hikes.

The union says that fares have “increased at five times the rate of public sector pay awards and at twice the speed of average earnings since 2010”.

Many workers are facing a real term pay cut, and the average commuter pays over 10 percent of their net income on fares.

But train company bosses are set to take home millions in wages and bonuses.

Stagecoach was recently bailed out of its Virgin East Coast franchise by the Tories.

Meanwhile, Stagecoach boss Martin Griffiths can look forward to a pay package of up to £2.5 million.

But workers are fighting back—they are entering the



**STAGECOACH boss Martin Griffiths (above) grabs a £2.5 million pay package for managing a failing firm, while workers protested over fair rises on Tuesday**

Pic: Guy Smallman

third year in the battle to keep guards on the trains. Fresh strike dates have been called on Northern, Merseyrail, Greater Anglia, South Western Railways and Island Line for Monday, Wednesday and Friday of next week.

Workers on Southern will strike next Monday.

And RMT members on

Merseyrail, Greater Anglia and South Western networks presented bosses with a wave of 24 hour strikes around Christmas.

It's part of a long-running dispute against the implementation of driver-only operation (Doo) on trains and defending the safety critical role of the guards.

Merseyrail workers struck

on 22 December, with some members of the Aslef drivers' union refusing to cross RMT picket lines.

The extension of Doo across rail networks is driven by the bosses' greed and the Tories' support for privatisation and deregulation.

RMT general secretary Mick Cash accused “the dead hand of the minority Tory

government” of “interfering in these disputes.” The union has released a short film called Unguarded that explores how important guards are in making travel accessible and safe.

RMT members at South Western struck on Sunday 31 December, hitting London Waterloo—one of the busiest stations in England.

RMT has also identified 141 stations that are currently unstaffed on the South Western network. They say without guards, these stations will become dangerous.

The fight over pay is still on. RMT and TSSA union members on the Virgin West Coast line struck for 24 hours on Friday 15 December. They were offered a deal just days later.

The 1,800 onboard train staff are fighting for an equal pay offer to that made for drivers. An RMT striker told Socialist Worker that bosses were “determined to make as much profit as they can”.

The new deal guarantees a 35-hour week, a £500 lump sum and 3.2 percent increase. The unions suspended further planned strikes on 22 December and 5 January for members to vote on it.

Everyone should support the workers fighting back against rail bosses out to drive down pay and undermine safety.

Coordinated strikes is the way to beat the bosses—workers on other networks should join the fight to save the role of the guard.

## PAY CAMPAIGNS

## Workers in Britain set for biggest pay cuts of 32 most advanced economies

by SADIE ROBINSON

**WORKERS IN** Britain will suffer the biggest pay cuts of the world's 32 most advanced economies in 2018, according to the TUC union federation.

The TUC analysis puts Hungary at the top of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development pay growth league, with an expected 4.9 percent rise. Greece is 27th with a rise of 0.2 percent.

Yet wages for workers in Britain are expected to fall by another 0.7 percent.

Wages are set to remain below 2008 levels and they aren't forecast to recover until 2025.

This follows analysis from the Resolution Foundation that predicted zero growth in real wages over the course of 2018.

### Average

This means pay cuts for many workers who receive less than the average rise.

No wonder workers are fed up. One in five are already looking for a new job according to a study by Investors in People. And almost half said they planned to look for a new



Frances O'Grady has criticised the Tories, but the TUC must do more to fight over poverty pay

job this year. Meanwhile the bosses are raking it in.

The Vlerick Business School found that the average FTSE 100 boss got an 11 percent rise in their median total income between 2015 and 2016.

They now grab an average of 94 times more than the average worker.

And the GMB union exposed how much faster pay has risen for bosses compared to workers over the last two decades.

It said the minimum wage would be £5.24 an hour higher had it risen at the same rate as the salary of a FTSE 100 boss.

That would give a worker over 25, working 40 hours a week, an annual wage of £26,000 instead of the current £14,664.

### Grabbed

Meanwhile the average FTSE 100 boss trousers £4.35 million a year.

By 4 January the average FTSE 100 boss had already grabbed the same amount of cash as the average worker earns over the whole of this year.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said that the TUC will “push to stop the worst exploitation, like zero hours contracts and

the pay penalty for agency workers”.

“We'll argue for more and better jobs,” she said. “And on May 12 we'll march together to demand a new deal for working people.”

It's good that the TUC has called a protest.

However, reversing the pay cuts will mean calling and organising more than one protest and, crucially, the strikes that have the power to beat the bosses.

### On other pages

Benefit entitlements go unclaimed >>Page 7